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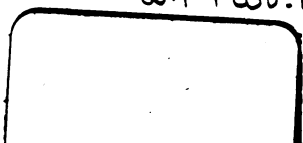


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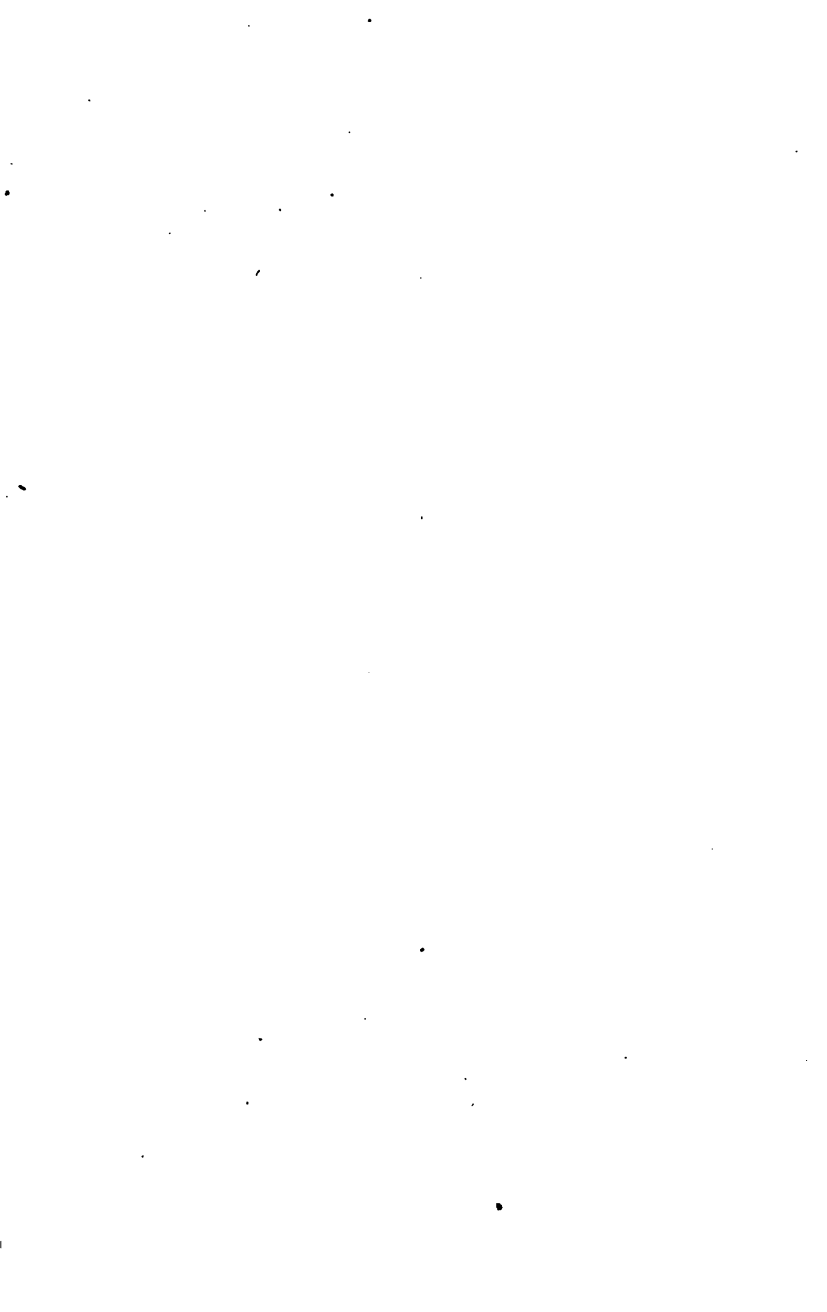
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II





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A U R E L I A N.

BY WILLIAM WARE,



AURELIAN:

OR,

ROME IN THE THIRD CENTURY.

IN LETTERS OF LUCIUS M. PISO, FROM ROME,

TO

FAUSTA THE DAUGHTER OF GRACCHUS,

AT PALMYRA.

BY WILLIAM WARE,
AUTHOR OF 'ZENOBIA' AND 'JULIAN.'

VOL. II.

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AURELIAN.

LETTER VIII.

FROM PISO TO FAUSTA.

MARCUS and Lucilia are inconsolable. Their grief, I fear, will be lasting as it is violent. They have no resource but to plunge into affairs and drive away memory by some active and engrossing occupation. Yet they cannot always live abroad ; they must at times return to themselves and join the company of their own thoughts. And then, memory is not to be put off ; at such moments this faculty seems to constitute the mind more than any other. It becomes the mind itself. The past rises up in spite of ourselves, and overshadows the present. Whether its scenes have been prosperous or afflictive, but especially if they have been shameful, do they present themselves with all the vividness of the objects before us and the passing hour, and infinitely increase our pains. We in vain attempt to escape. We are prisoners in the hands of a giant. To forget is not in our power. The will is impotent. The

effort to forget is often but an effort to remember. Fast as we fly, so fast the enemy of our peace pursues. Memory is a companion who never leaves us—or never leaves us long. It is the true Nemesis. Tartarean regions have no worse woes, nor the Hell of Christians, than memory inflicts upon those who have done evil. My friends struggle in vain. They have not done evil indeed, but they have suffered it. The sorest calamity that afflicts mortals has overtaken them ; their choicest jewel has been torn from them ; and they can no more drown the memory of their loss than they can take that faculty itself and tear it from their souls. Comfort cannot come from that quarter. It can come only from being re-possessed of that which has been lost hereafter, and from enjoying the hope of that felicity now. See how Marcus writes. After much else, he says,

‘ I miss you, Piso, and the conversations which we had together. I know not how it is, but your presence acted as a restraint upon my hot and impatient temper. Since your departure I have been little less than mad, and so far from being of service to Lucilia, she has been compelled to moderate her own grief in the hope to assuage mine. I have done nothing but rave, and curse my evil fortune. And can anything else be looked for ? How should a man be otherwise than exasperated when the very thing he loves best in the wide universe is, without a moment’s warning, snatched away from him ? A man falls into a passion if his seal is stolen, or his rings, or his jewels, if his dwelling burns down, or his slaves run away or die by some pestilence. And why should he not much more when the providence of the gods, or the same power whatever it may be that gave

us a child, tears it from us again ; and just then when we have so grown into it that it is like hewing us in two ? I can believe in nothing but capricious chance. We live by chance, and so we die. Such events are otherwise inexplicable. For what reason can by the most ingenious be assigned for giving life for a few years to a being like Gallus, and who then, before he is more than just past the threshold of life, before a single power of his nature has put itself forth, but at the moment when he is bound to his parents by ties of love which never afterwards would be stronger — is struck dead ? We can give no account of it. It is irreconcilable with the hypothesis of an intelligent and good Providence. It has all the features of chance upon it. A god could not have done it unless he had been the god of Tartarus. Dark Pluto might, or the avenging Furies, were they supreme. But away with all such dreams ! The slaves, who were his proper attendants, have been scourged and crucified. That at first gave me some relief ; but already I repent it. So it is with me ; I rush suddenly upon what at the moment I think right, and then as suddenly think and feel that I have done wrong, and so suffer. I see and experience nothing but suffering, whichever way I turn. Truly we are riddles. Piso, you cannot conceive of my loss. It was our only child — and the only one we shall ever know. I wish that I believed in the gods that I might curse them.'

And much more in the same frantic way. Time will blunt his grief ; but it will bring him I fear no other or better comfort. He hopes for oblivion of his loss ; but that can never be. He may cease to grieve as he grieves now ; but he can never cease to remember. I trust to

see him again ere long, and turn his thoughts into a better channel.

I did not forget to keep my promise to the wife of Macer. In truth I had long regarded it as essential to our safety almost, certainly to our success, that this man, and others of the same character, should be restrained in some way in their course of mistaken zeal ; and had long intended to use what influence to that end I might possess. Probus had promised to accompany me, and do what in him lay, to rescue religion from this peril at the hands of one of her best friends. He joined me toward the evening of the same day on which I had seen the wife of Macer, and we took our way toward his dwelling.

It was already past the hour of twilight when we reached the part of the city where Macer dwells, and entered the ruins among which his cabin stands. These ruins are those of extensive and magnificent baths destroyed a long time ago, and to this day remaining as the flames left them. At the rear of them, far from the street and concealed from it by arches and columns and fragments of wall, we were directed by the rays of a lamp streaming from a window, to the place we sought. We wound our way among these fallen or still standing masses of stone, which frequently hid from us the object of our search, till, as we found ourselves near the spot, we were arrested by the sound of a single voice uttering itself with vehemence and yet solemnity. We paused, but could not distinguish the words used ; but the same conviction possessed us as to its cause. It was Macer at prayer. We moved nearer, so that, without disturbing the family, we might still make ourselves of the number

of hearers. His voice, loud and shrill, echoed among the ruins and conveyed to us, though at some distance, every word that he uttered. But for the noise of carriages and passengers it would have penetrated even to the streets. The words we caught were such as these —

— ‘ If they hear thee not, O Lord, nor reverence thy messengers, but deny thee and turn upon those whom thou sendest the lip of scorn and the eye of pride, and will none of their teachings, and so do despite to the spirit of thy grace, and crucify the Lord afresh, then do thou, O Lord, come upon them as once upon the cities of the plain in the times of thine anger. Let fire from Heaven consume them. Let the earth yawn and swallow them up. Tear up the foundations of this modern Babylon ; level to the earth her proud walls ; and let her stand for a reproach, and a hissing, and a scorn, through all generations ; so that men shall say as they pass by, lo ! the fate of them that held to their idols rather than serve the living God ; their proud palaces are now dwellings of dragons, and over her ruins the trees of the forest are now spreading their branches. But yet, O Lord, may this never be ; but may a way of escape be made for them through thy mercy. And to this end may we thy servants, to whom thou hast given the sword of the spirit, gird it upon our sides, lift up our voices and spare not, day and night, morning and evening, in the public place, and at the corners of the streets ; in all places, and in every presence, proclaiming the good news of salvation. Let not cowardice seal our lips. Whether before gentile or jew, emperor or slave, may we speak as becomes the Lord’s anointed. Warm

the hearts of the cold and dead ; put fire into them ; fire from thine own altar. The world, O Lord, and its honors and vanities, seduce thine own servants from thee. They are afraid, they are cold, they are dead, and the enemy lifts himself up and triumphs. For this we would mourn and lament. Give us, O Lord, the courage and the zeal of thine early apostles and teachers so that no fear of tortures and death may make us traitors to Christ and thee.'

It was a long time that he went on in this strain, inveighing, with heat and violence, against all who withdrew their hand from the work, or abated their zeal. When he had ceased, and we stood waiting to judge whether the service were wholly ended, the voices of the whole family apparently, were joined together in a hymn of praise—Macer's now more gentle and subdued, as if to hear himself the tones of the children and of his wife who accompanied him. The burden of the hymn was also a prayer for a spirit of fidelity and a temper of patience, in the cause of truth and Christ. It was worship in the highest sense, and none within the dwelling could have joined more heartily than we did who stood without.

When it was ended, and with it evidently the evening service, we approached, and knocked for admittance. Macer appeared holding a light above his head, and perceiving who his guests were, gave us cordial welcome, at the same time showing us into his small apartment and placing stools for our accommodation. The room in which we were was small and vaulted, and built of stone in the most solid manner. I saw at once that it was one of the smaller rooms of the ancient bath, which

had escaped entire destruction and now served as a comfortable habitation. A door on the inner side appeared to connect it with a number of similar apartments. A table in the centre and a few stools, a shelf on which were arranged the few articles which they possessed both for cooking and eating their food, constituted the furniture of the room. In the room next beyond I could see pallets of straw laid upon the floor, which served for beds. Macer, his wife, and six children, composed the family then present; the two elder sons being yet absent at their work, in the shop of Demetrius. The mother held at her breast an infant of a year or more; one of three years sprang again upon his father's lap, as he resumed his seat after our entrance, whence he had apparently been just dislodged; the rest, sitting in obscure parts of the room, were at first scarcely visible. The wife of Macer expressed heartily her pleasure at seeing us, and said even more by her flushed and animated countenance than by her words. The severe countenance of Macer himself relaxed and gave signs of satisfaction.

'I owe you, Piso,' he said, 'many thanks for mercies shown to my wife and my little ones here, and I am glad to see you among us. We are far apart enough as the world measures such things, but in Christ we are one. At such times as these, when the Prince of Darkness rules, we ought if ever to draw toward each other, that so we may make better our common defence. I greet you as a brother—I trust to love you as one.'

I told him that nothing should be wanting on my part toward a free and friendly intercourse; that from all I had heard of him I had conceived a high regard for him, and owed him more thanks for what he had

done in behalf of our religion, than he could me for any services I had rendered him.

‘Me?’ said he, and his head fell upon his bosom. ‘What have I done for Christ to deserve the thanks of any? I have preached and I have prayed; I have opposed heresies and errors; I have wrestled with the enemies and corrupters of our faith within our own body and without; but the fruit seems nothing. The gentile is still omnipotent — heresy and error still abound.’

‘Yes, Macer,’ I replied, ‘that is certainly so, and may be so for many years to come, but still we are gaining. He who can remember twenty years can count a great increase. After the testimony borne by the martyrs of the Decian persecution to their faith, and all the proof they gave of sincere attachment to the doctrine of Christ, crowds have entered the church, an hundred for every one whose blood then flowed.’

‘And now,’ said Macer, his eye kindling with its wild fires, ‘the church is dead! The truest prayer that the Christian can now offer is, that it would please God to try us again as it were by fire! We slumber, Piso! The Christians are not now the Nazarites they were in the first age of the church. Divisions have crept in; tares have been sown with the wheat, and have come up, and are choking the true plants of God. I know not but that the signs of terror which are scaring the heavens ought rather to be hailed as tokens of love. Better a thousand perish on the rack or by the axe, than that the church itself faint away and die.’

‘It will not do,’ said Probus, ‘always to depend upon such remedies of our sloth and heresies. Surely it were better to prosper in some other and happier way. All I

think we can say of persecution, and of the oppositions of our enemies, is this, that if it be in the providence of God that they cannot be avoided, we have cause to bless him that their issue is good rather than evil ; that they serve as tests by which the genuiue is tried and proved ; that they give the best and highest testimony to the world that man can give, of his sincerity ; that they serve to bind together into one compact and invincible phalanx the disciples of our common master, however in many things they may divide and separate. But, were it not better, if we could attain an equal good without the suffering ? ’

‘ I believe that to be impossible,’ said Macer. ‘ Since Jesus began his ministry, persecution has been the rod that has been laid upon the church without sparing, and the fruit has been abundant. Without it, like these foolish children, we might run riot in all iniquity.’

‘ I do not say that the rod has not been needed,’ answered Probus, ‘ nor that good has not ensued ; but only, that it would be better, wiser, and happier, to reach the same good without the rod ; just as it is better when your children, without chastisement, fulfil your wishes and perform their tasks. We hope and trust that our children will grow up to such virtue, that they will no longer need the discipline of suffering to make them better. Ought we not to look and pray for a period to arrive in the history of the church, when men shall no longer need to be lashed and driven, but shall of themselves discern what is best and cleave to it ? ’

‘ That might indeed be better,’ replied the other ; ‘ but the time is not come for it yet. The church I say is

corrupt, and it cries out for another purging. Christians are already lording it over one another. The bishop of Rome sets himself up, as a lord, over subjects. A Roman Cæsar walks it not more proudly. What with his robes of state, and his seat of gold, and his golden rod, and his altar set out with vessels of gold and silver, and his long train of menials and subordinates, poor simple Macer, who learned of Christ, as he hopes, is at a loss to discern the follower of the lowly Jesus, but takes Felix, the Christian servant, for some Fronto of a Heathen temple! Were the power mine, as the will is, never would I stay for Aurelian, but my own arm should sweep from the places they pollute the worst enemies of the Saviour. Did Jesus die that Felix might flaunt his peacock's feathers in the face of Rome?

'We cannot hope, Macer,' answered Probus, 'to grow up to perfection at once. I see and bewail the errors at which you point as well as you. But if, to remove them, we bring down the heavy arm of Rome upon our heads — the remedy may prove worse than the disease.'

'No. That could not be! Let those who with open eyes abuse the gifts of God, perish! If this faith cannot be maintained undefiled by Heathen additions, let it perish!'

'But God dealeth not so with us,' continued Probus; 'he beareth long and patiently. We are not destroyed because in the first years of our life we do not rise to all virtue, but are spared to fourscore. Ought we not to manifest a like patience and forbearance? By waiting patiently we shall see our faults, and one by one correct them. There is still some reason and discernment left among us. We are not all fools and blind. And the

faults which we correct ourselves, by our own action, and the conviction of our own minds acting freely and voluntarily, will be more truly corrected, than if we are but frightened away from them for a time by the terrors of the Roman sword. I think, Macer, and so thinks Piso, that, far from seeking to inflame the common mind, and so drawing upon us the evils which are now with reason apprehended, we should rather aim to ward them off.'

'Never!' cried Macer with utmost indignation. 'Shall the soldier of the cross shrink—'

'No, Macer, he need not shrink. Let him stand armed in panoply complete; prompt to serve, willing to die; but let him not wantonly provoke an enemy who may not only destroy him, that were a little thing, but, in the fury of the onset, thousands with him, and, perhaps, with them the very faith for which they die! The Christian is not guiltless who—though it be in the cause of Christ—rushes upon unnecessary death. You, Macer, are not only a Christian and soldier of Jesus Christ, but a man, who, having received life from the Creator, have no right wantonly to throw it away. You are a husband, and you are bound to live for your wife;—these are your children, and you are bound to live for them.'

'He,' said Macer, solemnly, 'who hateth not father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sister, yea and his own life also, cannot be my disciple.'

'Yes,' replied Probus, 'that is true; we are to be ready and willing to suffer for Christ and truth; but not to seek it. He who seeks martyrdom is no martyr. Selfish passions have then mingled their impure current with that of love to God, and the sacrifice is not without

spot and blemish. Jesus did not so ; nor his first followers. When the Lord was persecuted in one city, he staid not there to inflame it more and more ; he fled to another. Paul and Peter and Barnabas stood ever for their rights ; they suffered not wrong willingly. When the ark of truth is intrusted to few hands, they must bear it forward boldly, but with care, else are they at a blow cut off, and the ark with its precious burden borne away and lost — or miracles alone can rescue it. But when the time comes that no prudence or care will avail, then they may not refuse the issue, but must show that life is nothing in comparison of truth and God.'

'Probus,' said Macer, 'I like not your timid counsels. 'Tis not by such that Christ's cause shall ever advance, or that period ever come when he, the long-looked and waited for, shall descend, and the millenial reign begin. Life is nothing to me and less than nothing. I hold it as dirt and dross. And if by throwing it away I can add such a commentary to my preaching as shall strike a single Pagan heart, I shall not have died in vain ; and if the blood that shall flow from these veins, may serve but as a purge, to carry off the foul humors that now fester and rage in the body of the church, thrice happy shall I be to see it flow. And for these — let them be as the women and children of other times, and hold not back when their master calls. Arria ! do thou set before thee St. Blandina, and if the Lord let thee be as her, thou wilt have cause to bless his name.'

'Never, Macer, would I shrink from any trial to which the Lord in his wisdom might call me — that you know. But has not Probus uttered a truth, when he says, that we are not innocent, and never glorious, when

we seek death? that he who seeks martyrdom is no martyr? Listen, Macer, to the wisdom of Probus and the noble Piso. Did you not promise that you would patiently hear them?’

‘Woman—I have heard them—their words are naught, stark naught, or worse. Where would have been the blessed gospel at this hour, had it been committed to such counsels? Even under Nero would it have died for want of those who were willing to die for it. I am a soldier of the cross, whose very vocation it is to fight and die. And if I may but die, blessed Jesus, for thee! then may I hope that thou wilt deal mercifully with thy servant at thy judgment-seat. I hear thy voice ever sounding in my ear, reproving me for my cowardice. Have patience with me, and I will give thee all. And if labor, and torture, and death, would but cancel sin!—But alas! even they may not suffice.’

‘Then, dear father,’ said one of his daughters who had drawn near and seated herself at his knee, while the others had gathered round, ‘then will we add ourselves to the sacrifice.’

‘Would you?’ said Macer—in an absent, musing way—as if some other thought were occupying him.

Thinking that his love of his children, evidently a very strong affection in him, might be made to act as a restraint, I said, ‘that I feared he greatly exposed his little family to unnecessary danger. Already had his dwelling been once assailed, and the people were now ripe for any violence. This group of little ones can ill encounter a rude and furious mob.’

‘They can die, can they not?’ said Macer. ‘Is that

difficult, or impossible ? If the Lord need them, they are his. I can ask no happier lot for them than that by death they may glorify God. And what is it to die so, more than in another way ? Let them die in their beds, and whom do they benefit ? They die then to themselves, and no one is the gainer ; let them die by the sword of Varus, or by the stones of the populace, and then they become themselves stones in the foundation of that temple of God, of which Jesus is the chief corner-stone, and they are glorious forever. What say you, Cicer, will you die for Christ ?'

The little fellow hid his head in his father's bosom at this sudden appeal, but soon drew it out and said,

'I would rather die for you, father.'

'Ah !' said Macer, 'how am I punished in my children ! Cicer, would you not die for Christ ?'

'I would die for him if you wish it.'

'Macer,' said Probus, 'do you not see how God has bound you and this family into one ? and he surely requires you not to separate yourself, their natural protector, from them forever ; still less, to involve them in all the sufferings which, taking the course you do, may come upon them at any hour.'

'Probus ! their death would give me more pleasure than their life, dying for Christ. I love them now and here, fondly as ever parent loved his children,—but what is now, and here ? Nothing. The suffering of an hour or of a moment joins us together again, where suffering shall be no more, and death no more. To-morrow ! yes, to-morrow ! would I that the wrath of these idol-worshippers might be turned against us. Rome must be roused ; she sleeps the sleep of death ;

and the church sleeps it too ; both need that they who are for the Lord should stand forth, and, not waiting to be attacked, themselves assail the enemy, who need but to be assailed with the zeal and courage of men, who were once to be found in the church, to be driven at all points.'

'But, father,' said the daughter who had spoken before, 'other Christians think not so. They believe for the most part, as I hear, with Probus and Piso, that on no account should we provoke the gentiles, or give them cause of complaint against us ; they think that to do so would greatly harm us ; that our duty is to go on the even tenor of our way, worshipping God after our own doctrine, and in our own manner, and claiming and exercising all our rights as citizens, but abstaining from every act that might rouse their anger, or needlessly irritate them — irritated, necessarily, almost beyond bearing, by the wide and increasing prosperity of our faith, and the daily falling away of the temple worshippers. Would it be right, dearest father, to do that which others approved not, and the effect of which might be, not only to draw down evil upon your and our heads, but upon thousands of others ? We cannot separate ourselves from our brethren ; if one suffer all will suffer —'

'Ælia, my daughter, there is a judge within the breast, whom I am bound to obey rather than any other counsellor, either man or woman. I cannot believe, because another believes, a certain truth. Neither can I act in a certain way because others hold it their duty to act so. I must obey the inward voice, and no other. If I abandon this, I am lost — I am on the desert without sun, moon or stars to guide me. All the powers of

the earth could not bribe nor drag me from that which I hold to be the true order of conduct for me ; shown by the finger of God to be such.'

'But, father,' continued the daughter, pursuing her object, 'are we not too lately entered among the Christians to take upon us a course which they condemn ? It is but yesterday that we were among the enemies of this faith. Are we to-day to assume the part of leaders ? Would not modesty teach us a different lesson ?'

'Modesty has nothing to do with truth,' said Macer. 'He who is wholly a Christian to-day, is all that he can be to-morrow, or next year. I am as old in faith and zeal as Piso, Probus, or Felix. No one can believe more, or more heartily, by believing longer. Nay, it is they who are newly saved who are most sensible to the blessing. Custom in religion as in other things dulls the soul. Were I a Christian much longer before God called me to serve him by suffering or death, I fear I should be then spiritually dead, and so worse than before I believed. Let it be to-morrow, O Lord, that I shall glorify thee !'

It was plain that little impression was to be made upon the mind of Macer. But we ceased not to urge him farther, his wife and elder children uniting with us in importunate entreaty and expostulation. But all in vain. In his stern and honest enthusiasm he believed all prudence, cowardice ; all calculation, worldliness ; all moderation and temperance, treason to the church and Christ. Yet none of the natural current of the affections seemed to be dried up or poisoned. No one could be more bound to his wife and children ; and, toward us, though in our talk we spared him not, he ever main-

tained the same frank and open manner—yielding never an inch of ground, and uttering himself with an earnestness and fury such as I never saw in another ; but, soon as he had ceased speaking, subsiding into a gentleness that seemed almost that of a woman, and playfully sporting with the little boy that he held on his knee.

Soon as our conversation was ended, Macer, turning to his wife, exclaimed,

‘ But what hinders that we should set before our visitors such hospitality as our poor house affords ? Arria, have we not such as may well enough entertain Christians ? ’

Ælia, at a word from her mother, and accompanied by her sister, immediately busied themselves in the simple rites of hospitality, and soon covered the table which stood in the centre of the room with bread, lettuces, figs, and a flask of wine. While they were thus engaged, I could not but observe the difference in appearance of the two elder sisters, who, with equal alacrity, were setting out the provisions for our repast. One was clad like the others of the family in the garments common to the poor. The other — she who had spoken — was arrayed, not richly, but almost so, or, I should rather say, fancifully, and with studied regard to effect. While I was wondering at this, and seeking in my own mind for its explanation, I was interrupted in my thoughts by Macer.

‘ Thanks to Aurelian, Piso, we are able, though poor, as you see, and dwelling in these almost subterranean vaults, to live above the fear of absolute want. But especially are we indebted for many of our comforts, and for such luxury as this flask of Massican, to my partly

gentile daughter, Ælia, whom you behold moving among us, as if by her attire she were not of us — but Cicer's heart is not truer — and who will, despite her faith and her father's bidding, dance and sing for the merriment of these idolaters. Never before, I believe, had Christian preacher a dancing-girl for a daughter.'

A deep blush passed over the features of the daughter as she answered,

'But, father, you know that in my judgment — and whose in this matter is so to be trusted? — I am in no way injured by my art, and it adds somewhat to the common stock. I see not why I need be any the less a Christian, because I dance; especially, as with me, it is but one of the forms of labor. Were it forbidden by our faith, or could it be shown to be to me an evil, I would cease. But most sure I am it is neither. Let me now appeal to Probus for my justification, and to Piso.'

'Doubtless,' said Probus, 'those Christians are right who abstain from the theatres, the amphitheatres, the circuses, and from the places of public amusement where sights and sounds meet ear and eye such as the pure should never hear or see, and such as none can hear or see and maintain their purity. The soul is damaged in spite of herself. But for these arts of music and dancing, practised for the harmless entertainment of those who feast their friends, — where alone I warrant Ælia is found — who can doubt that she is right? Were not the reception of the religion of Christ compatible with indulgence in innocent amusement, or the practice of harmless arts such as these, few, I fear, would receive it. Christianity condemns many things, which, by Pagans, are held to be allowable, but not everything.'

‘Willingly would I abandon my art,’ said Ælia, ‘did I perceive it to injure the soul ; or could I in other ways buy bread for our household. So dearly do I prize this new-found faith, that for its sake, were it to be retained in no other way, would I relinquish it, and sink into the deeper poverty that would then be ours, or drudge at some humbler toil.’

‘Do it, do it, Ælia,’ said Macer ; ‘and the Lord will love thee all the more. ’Tis the only spot on thy white and glistening robes. The Lord loves not more than I to see thee wheeling and waving to and fro, to supply mirth to those, who, mayhap, would crucify thee the next hour, as others crucified thy master.’

Tears fell from the eyes of the fair girl as she answered,

‘Father, it shall be as you wish. Not willingly, but by constraint, have I labored as I have. God will not forsake us, and will, I cannot doubt, open some new path of labor for me — if indeed the disorders of the times do not first scatter or destroy us.’

I here said to Macer and his daughter, that there need be no hesitation about abandoning the employment in question, from any doubt concerning a future occupation ; if Ælia would but accompany her mother, when next she went to visit Julia, I could assure her of obtaining there all she could desire.

At this the little boy, whom Macer held, clapped his hands and cried out with joy — ‘Ah ! then will Ælia be always with us and go away no more ;’ and flying to his sister was caught by her in her arms.

The joy diffused throughout the little circle at this news was great. All were glad that Ælia was to dance

and sing no more, for all wished her at home, and her profession had kept her absent almost every day. The table was now spread, and we sat down to the frugal repast, Macer first offering a prayer to God.

‘It is singular,’ said he, when we were seated, ‘that in my Heathen estate, I ever asked the blessing of the gods before I ate. Nay, and notwithstanding the abominations of my life, was often within the temples a worshipper. I verily believe there are many Christians who pray less than the Heathen, and less after they become Christian than before.’

‘I can readily believe it,’ said Probus. ‘False religions multiply outward acts ; and for the reason, that they make religion to consist in them. A true faith, which places religion in the inward disposition, not in services, will diminish them. More prayers were said, and more rites performed in the temple of Jupiter, where my father was priest, than the Christian church, where I serve, ever witnesses. But what then ? With the Pagan worshipper religion ended when the service closed, and he turned from the temple to the world. With the Christian, the highest service only then commences when he leaves the church. Religion, with him, is virtuous action, more than it is meditation or prayer. He prays without ceasing, not by uttering without cessation the language of prayer, but by living holily. Every act of every hour, which is done conscientiously is a prayer, as well as the words we speak, and is more pleasing to God, for the reason that practice is better than mere profession — doing better than saying.’

‘That is just, Probus,’ replied Macer. ‘When I prayed as an idolater, it was because I believed that the

gods required such outward acknowledgment, and that some evil or other might befall me through their vengeance, if I did not. But when I had ended that duty I had ended my religion, and my vices went on none the less prosperously. Often indeed my prayers were for special favors, — wealth, or success in some affair — and when, after wearying myself with repeating them a thousand times, the favors were not bestowed, how have I left the temple in a rage, cursing the gods I had just been worshipping, and swearing never more to propitiate them by prayer or sacrifice. Sometimes I repented of such violence, but oftener kept my word and tried some other god. You, Probus, were, I may believe, of a more even temper ?

‘ Yes, perhaps so. My father was one of the most patient and gentle of men, and religious after the manner of our remoter ancestors of the days of the republic. He was my instructor ; and from him I learned truths which were sufficient for my happiness under ordinary circumstances. I was a devout and constant worshipper of the gods. My every-day life may then have been as pure as it has been since I have been a Christian ; and my prayers as many or more. The instincts of my nature, which carried the soul toward some great and infinite being, which I could not resist, kept me within the bounds of that prudent and virtuous life which I believed would be most acceptable to them. But when a day of heavy and insupportable calamity came upon me, and I was made to look after the foundations of what I had been believing, I found there were none. I was like a ship tossed about by the storms, without rudder

or pilot. I then knew not whether there were gods or not ; or if there were any, who, among the multiplicity worshipped in Rome, the true ones were. In my grief, I railed at the heavens and their rulers, for not revealing themselves to us in our darkness and weakness ; and cursed them for their cruelty. Soon after I became a Christian. The difference between my state then, and now, is this. I believed then ; but it was merely instinctive. I could give no reason to myself nor to others for my faith. It was something and yet nothing. Now, I have somewhat to stand upon. I can prove to myself, and to others, my religion, as well as other things. I have knowledge as well as blind belief. It is good to believe in something, and in some sort, though one can give no account of his faith ; but it is better to believe in that which we know, as we know other things. I have now, as a Christian, the same strength of belief in God, providence, and futurity, that I have in any facts attested by history. Jesus has announced them or confirmed them, and they are susceptible of proof. I differed from you, **Macer**, in this ; that I cursed not the gods in my passion, or caprice ; I was for years and years their humble, and contented, and patient worshipper. I rebelled not till I suffered cruel disappointment, and in my faith could find no consolation or light. One real sorrow, by which the foundations of my earthly peace were all broken up, revealed to me the nothingness of my so called religion. Into what a new world, **Macer**, has our new faith introduced us ! I am now happier than ever I was, even with my wife and children around me.'

' Some of our neighbors,' said **Arria**, ' wonder what it is that makes us so light of heart, notwithstanding our

poverty and the dangers to which we are so often exposed. I tell them that they, who, like us, believe in the providence of a God, who is always near us and within us, and in the long reign with Christ as soon as death is past, have nothing to fear. That which they esteem the greatest evil of all, is, to us, an absolute gain. Upon this they either silently wonder, or laugh and deride. However, many too believe.'

'Probus, we are all ready to be offered up,' the enthusiast rejoined. 'God's mercy to me is beyond all power of mine to describe, in that he has touched and converted the hearts of every one under my roof. Now if to this mercy he will but add one more, that we may glorify him by our death as well as in our life, the cup of his servant will be full and running over.'

Probus did not choose again to engage with his convert upon that theme, knowing him to be beyond the reach of influence and control. We could not but marvel to see to what extent he had infused his own enthusiasm into his family. His wife indeed and elder daughters would willingly see him calmer and less violent when abroad, but like him, being by nature of warm temperament, they are like him Christians warm and zealous beyond almost any whom I have seen. They are as yet also so recently transferred from their Heathen to their Christian state, that their sight is still dazzled, and they see not objects in their true shapes and proportions. In their joy they seem to others, and perhaps often are, greatly extravagant in the expression of their feelings and opinions.

When our temperate repast was ended, Macer again prayed, and we then separated. Our visit proved wholly

ineffectual as to the purpose we had in view, but by no means so when I consider the acquaintance which it thus gave me with a family in the very humblest condition, who yet were holding and equally prizing the same opinions, at which, after so much research and labor, I had myself arrived. I perceived in this power of Christianity to adapt itself to minds so different in their state of previous preparation, and in their ability to examine and sift a question which was offered to them ; in the facility and quickness with which it seized both upon the understanding and the affections ; in the deep convictions which it produced of its own truth and excellence, and the scorn and horror with which it filled the mind for its former superstitions — I saw in this an element of strength, and of dominion, such as even I had hardly conceived, and which assures me that this religion is destined to a universal empire. Not more certainly do all men need it than they will have it. When in this manner, with everything against it, in the habits, lives, and prejudices of men — with itself almost against itself in its strictness and uncompromising morality — it nevertheless forces its way into minds of every variety of character, and diffuses wherever it goes the same inward happiness ; — its success under such circumstances is at once an argument for its truth, and an assurance that it will pause in its progress not till it shall have subdued the world to its dominion.

Julia was deeply interested in all that I told her of the family of Macer, and will make them all her special charge. Ælia will I hope become in some capacity a member of our household.

I ought to tell you that we have often of late been at the Gardens, where we have seen both Livia and Aurelian. Livia is the same, but the Emperor is changed. A gloomy horror seems to sit upon him, which both indisposes him to converse as formerly, and others to converse with him. Especially has he shown himself averse to discussion of any point that concerns the Christians, at least with me. When I would willingly have drawn him that way, he has shrunk from it with an expression of distaste, or with more expressive silence, or the dark language of his terrific frown. For me however he has no terrors, and I have resolved to break through all the barriers he chooses to set up around him, and learn if I can what his feelings and purposes precisely are. One conversation may reveal them in such a way, as may make it sufficiently plain what part he means to act, and what measure of truth there may be in the current rumors ; in which, for my own part, I cannot bring myself to place much reliance. I doubt even concerning the death of Aurelia, whether, even if it has taken place, it is not to be traced to some cause other than her religion.

A day has passed. I have seen the Emperor, as I was resolved to do, and now I no longer doubt what his designs are, nor that they are dark as they have been represented ; yea, and darker, even as night is darker than day.

Upon reaching the palace, I was told that the Emperor was exercising at the hippodrome, toward which I then bent my steps. It lies at some distance from the palace, concealed from it by intervening groves. Soon

as I came in sight of it, I beheld Aurelian upon his favorite horse running the course as if contending for a prize, plying, the while, the fierce animal he bestrode with the lash, as if he were some laggard who needed rousing to his work. Swifter than the wind he flew by me, how many times I know not, without noting apparently that any one was present beside the attendant slaves; nor did he cease till the horse, spent and exhausted, no longer obeyed the will of even the Emperor of the world. Many a noble charger has he in this manner rode till he has fallen dead. So long used has this man been to the terrific game of war, and the scenes and sights which that reveals, stirring to their depths all the direst passions of our nature, that now, at home and at peace, life grows stale and flat, and needs the artificial stimulants which violent and extreme modes of action can alone supply. The death of a horse on the course, answers now for a legion slain in battle; an unruly, or disobedient, or idle slave hewn in two, affords the relief which the execution of prisoners has been accustomed to yield. Weary of inaction, he pants for the day to arrive when, having completed the desigus he has set on foot in the city, he shall again join the army, now accumulating in huge masses in Thrace, and once more find himself in the East, on the way to new conquests and fresh slaughter,

As he threw himself from his horse, now breathing hard and scarcely supporting himself, the foam rolling from him like snow, he saluted me in his usual manner.

‘A fair and fortunate day to you, Piso! And what may be the news in the city? I have rode fast and far, but have heard nothing. I come back empty as I went out, save the heat which I have put into my veins. This

horse is he I was seen upon from the walls of Palmyra by your and other traitor eyes. But for first passing through the better part of my leg and then the saddle, the arrow that hit me then had been the death of him. But death is not for him, nor he for death ; he and his rider are something alike, and will long be so, if auguries ever speak truth. And if there be not truth in auguries, Piso, where is it to be found among mortals ? These three mornings have I rode him to see if in this manner he could be destroyed, but thou seest how it issues ; I should destroy myself before him. But what, I say, is the news ? How does the lady Julia ? and the Queen ?'

Replying first to these last inquiries, I then said that there was little news I believed in the city. The only thing, perhaps, that could be treated as news, was the general uneasiness of the Christians.

' Ah ! They are uneasy ? By the gods, not wholly without reason. Were it not for them I had now been, not here chafing my horse and myself on a hippodrome, but tearing up instead the hard sands of the Syrian deserts. They weigh upon me like a nightmare ! They are a visible curse of the gods upon the state — but, being seen, it can be removed. I reckon not you among this tribe, Piso, when I speak of them. What purpose is imputed ?'

' Rumor varies. No distinct purpose is named, but rather a general one of abridging some of their liberties—suppressing their worship, and silencing their priests.'

' Goes it no further ?'

' Not with many ; for the people are still willing to believe that Aurelian will inflict no needless suffering. They see you great in war, severe in the chastisement of the enemies of the state, and just in the punishment

inflicted upon domestic rebels ; and they conceive that in regard to this simple people you will not go beyond the rigor I have just named.'

'Truly they give me credit,' replied Aurelian, 'for what I scarcely deserve. But an Emperor can never hear the truth. Piso ! they will find themselves deceived. One or the other must fall—Hellenism or Christianity ! I knew not, till my late return from the East, the ravages made by this modern superstition, not only throughout Rome, but the world. In this direction I have for many years been blind. I have had eyes only for the distant enemies of my country, and the glories of the battle-field. But now, upon resting here a space in the heart of the empire, I find that heart eaten out and gone ; the religion of ancient Rome, which was its very life, decaying, and almost dead, through the rank growth of this overshadowing poison-tree that has shot up at its side. It must be cut up by the roots—the branches hewn away—the leaves stripped and scattered to the winds—nay, the very least fibre that lurks below the surface with life in it, must be wrenched out and consumed. We must do thus by the Christians and their faith, or they will do so by us.'

'I am hardly willing,' I replied, 'to believe what I have heard ; nor will I believe it. It were an act, so mad and unwise, as well as so cruel, that I will not believe it though coming from the lips of Aurelian !'

'It is true, Piso, as the light of yonder sun !' But if thou wilt not believe, wait a day or two and proof enough shalt thou have—proof that shall cure thy infidelity in a river of Christian blood.'

'Still, Aurelian,' I answered, 'I believe not ; nor

will, till that river shall run down before my eyes red and thick as the Orontes !'

'How, Piso, is this ? I thought you knew me !'

'In part I am sure I do. I know you neither to be a madman nor a fool, both which in one would you be to attempt what you have now threatened.'

'Young Piso, you are bold !'

'I make no boast of courage,' I replied ; 'I know that in familiar speech with Aurelian, I need not fear him. Surely you would not converse on such a subject with a slave or a flatterer. A Piso can be neither. I can speak, or I can be silent ; but if I speak —'

'Say on, say on, in the name of the gods !'

'What I would say to Aurelian then is this, that slaughter as he may, the Christians cannot be exterminated ; that though he decimated, first Rome and then the empire, there would still be left a seed that would spring up and bear its proper harvest. Nay, Aurelian, though you halved the empire, you could not win your game. The Christians are more than you deem them.'

'Be it so,' replied the Emperor ; 'nevertheless I will try. But they are not so many as you rate them at, neither by a direct nor an indirect enumeration.'

'Let that pass, then,' I answered. 'Let them be a half, a quarter, a tenth part of what I believe them to be, it will be the same ; they cannot be exterminated. Soon as the work of death is done, that of life will begin again, and the growth will be the more rank for the blood spilled around. Outside of the tenth part, Aurelian, that now openly professes this new religion, there lies another equal number of those who do not openly profess it, but do so either secretly, or else view it with favor and with the

desire to accept it. Your violence, inflicted upon the open believers, reaches not them, for they are an invisible multitude ; but no sooner has it fallen and done its work of ruin, than this other multitude slowly reveals itself, and stands forth heirs and professors of the persecuted faith, and ready, like those who went before them, to live for it and die for it.'

'What you say may be so,' answered Aurelian ; 'I had thought not of it. Nevertheless, I will try.'

'Moreover,' I continued, 'in every time of persecution, there are those—sincere believers, but timid—who dare not meet the threatened horrors. These deny not their faith, but they shrink from sight ; they for a season disappear ; their hearts worship as ever, but their tongues are silent ; and search as they may, your emissaries of blood cannot find them. But soon as the storm is overpast, then do they come forth again, as insects from the leaves that sheltered them from the storm, and fill again the forsaken churches.'

'Nevertheless I will try for them.'

'Then will you be, Aurelian, as one that sheds blood, because he will shed it—seeing that the end at which you aim cannot in such way be reached. Confiscation, imprisonment, scourging, fires, torture, and death, will all be in vain ; and with no more prospect that by such oppression Christianity can be annihilated, than there would be of rooting out poppies from your fields when as you struck off the heads or tore up the old roots, the ripe seeds were scattered abroad over the soil, a thousand for every parent stalk that fell. You will drench yourself in the blood of the innocent, only that you may do it—while no effect shall follow.'

‘Let it be so then ; even so. Still I will not forbear. But this I know, Piso, that when a disaffection has broken out in a legion, and I have caused the half thereof, or its tenth, to be drawn forth and cut to pieces by the other part, the danger has disappeared. The physic has been bitter, but it has cured the patient ! I am a good surgeon ; and well used to letting blood. I know the wonders it works and shall try it now, not doubting to see some good effects. When poison is in the veins, let out the blood, and the new that comes in is wholesome. Rome is poisoned !’

‘Great Emperor,’ I replied, ‘you know nothing, allow me to say, whereof you affirm. You know not the Christians, and how can you deem them poison to the state ? A purer brotherhood never has the world seen. I am but of late one among them, and it is but a few months since I thought of them as you now do. But I knew nothing of them. Now I know them. And knowledge has placed them before me in another light. If, Aurelian —’

‘I know nothing of them, Piso, it is true ; and I wish to know nothing — nothing more, than that they are Christians ! that they deny the good gods ! that they aim at the overthrow of the religion of the state — that religion under whose fostering care Rome has grown up to her giant size — that they are fire-brands of discord and quarrel in Rome and throughout the world ! Greater would my name be, could I extirpate this accursed tribe than it would be for triumphing over both the East and West, or though I gained the whole world.’

‘Aurelian,’ I replied, ‘this is not the language I used to hear from your lips. Another spirit possesses you, and it is not hard to tell whence it comes.’

‘ You would say — from Fronto.’

‘ I would. There is the rank poison, that has turned the blood in the veins of one, whom justice and wisdom once ruled, into its own accursed substance.’

‘ I and Rome, Piso,’ said Aurelian, ‘ owe much to Fronto. I confess that his spirit now possesses me. He has roused the latent piety into action and life, which I received with my mother’s milk, but which, the gods forgive me ! carried away by ambition, had well nigh gone quite out in my soul. My mother — dost thou know it ? — was a priestess of Apollo, and never did god or goddess so work by unseen influence to gain a mortal’s heart, as did she to fill mine with reverence of the deities of heaven — specially of the great god of light. I was early a wayward child. When a soldier in the legions I now command, my life was what a soldier’s is — a life of action, hardship, peril, and blood. The deities of Heaven soon became to me as if they were not. And so it has been for well nigh all the years of my life. But, the gods be thanked, Fronto has redeemed me ! and since I have worn this diadem have I toiled, Rome can testify with what zeal, to restore to her gods their lost honors — to purge her worship of the foul corruptions that were bringing it into contempt — and raise it higher than ever in the honor of the people, by the magnificence of the temples I have built ; by the gifts I have lavished upon them ; by the ample riches wherewith I have endowed the priesthood. And more than once, while this work has been achieving, has the form of my revered parent, beautiful in the dazzling robes of her office, stood by my bedside — whether in dream, or in vision, or in actual presence, I cannot tell — and blessed me for my

pious enterprise — “The gods be thanked,” the lips have said, or seemed to say, “that thy youth lasts not always, but that age has come, and with it second childhood in thy reverence of the gods, whose worship it was mine to put into thy infant heart. Go on thy way, my son ! Build up the fallen altars, and lay low the aspiring fane of the wicked. Finish what thou hast begun, and all time shall pronounce thee greatest of the great.” Should I disobey the warning ? The gods forbid ! and save me from such impiety. I am now, Piso, doubly armed for the work I have taken in hand—first by the zeal of the pious Fronto, and second, by the manifest finger of Heaven pointing the way I should go. And, please the Almighty Ruler ! I will enter upon it, and it shall not be for want of a determined will and of eyes too used to the shedding of blood to be frightened now though an ocean-full were spilled before them, if this race be not utterly swept from the face of the earth, from the suckling to the silver head, from the beggar to the prince—and from Rome all around to the four winds, as far as her almighty arms can reach.’

My heart sunk within me as he spoke, and my knees trembled under me. I knew the power and spirit of the man, and I now saw that superstition had claimed him for her own ; that he would go about his work of death and ruin, armed with his own cruel and bloody mind, and urged behind by the fiercer spirit still of Pagan bigotry. It seemed to me, in spite of what I had just said myself, and thought I believed, as if the death-note of Christianity had now been rung in my ear. The voice of Aurelian as he spoke had lost its usual sharpness,

and fallen into a lower tone full of meaning, and which said to me that his very inmost soul was pouring itself out, with the awful words he used. I felt utterly helpless and undone — like an ant in the pathway of a giant — incapable of resistance or escape. I suppose all this was visible in my countenance. I said nothing; and Aurelian, after pausing a moment, went on.

‘Think me not, Piso, to be using the words of an idle braggart in what I have said. Who has known Aurelian, when once he has threatened death, to hold back his hand? But I will give thee earnest of my truth!’

‘I require it not, Aurelian. I question not thy truth.’

‘I will give it notwithstanding, Piso. What will you think — you will think as you ever have of me — if I should say that already, and upon one of my own house, infected with this hell-begotten atheism, has the axe already fallen!’

Hearing the horrible truth from his own lips, it seemed as if I had never heard it before. I hardly had believed it.

‘Tyrant!’ I exclaimed, ‘it cannot be! What, Aurelia?’

‘Yes, Aurelia! Keep thy young blood cool, Piso. Yes, Aurelia! Ere I struck at others, it behoved me to reprove my own. It was no easy service, as you may guess, but it must be done. And not only was Aurelia herself pertinaciously wedded to this fatal mischief, but she was subduing the manly mind of Mucapor too, who, had he been successfully wrought upon, were as good as dead to me and to Rome — and he is one whom our legions cannot spare. We have Christians more than enough already in our ranks: a Christian general was not to be borne. This was additional matter of accusation against Aurelia, and made it right that she should

die. But she had her free choice of life, honor, rank, riches, and, added to all, Mucapor, whose equal Rome does not hold, if she would but take them. One word spoken and they were all her own ; with no small chance that she should one day be what Livia is. But that one word her obstinate superstition would not let her speak.'

'No, Aurelian ; there is that in the Christian superstition that always forbids the uttering of that one word. Death to the Christian is but another word for life. Apostacy is the true death. You have destroyed the body of Aurelia, but her virtuous soul is already with God, and it is you who have girded upon her brow a garland that shall never fade. Of that much may you make your boast.'

'Piso, I bear with you, and shall ; but there is no other in Rome who might say so much.'

'Nay, nay, Aurelian, there I believe you better than you make yourself. To him who is already the victim of the axe or the beasts do you never deny the liberty of the tongue,—such as it then is.'

'Upon Piso, and he the husband of Julia, I can inflict no evil, nor permit it done.'

'I would take shelter, Aurelian, neither behind my own name, my father's, nor my wife's. I am a Christian—and such fate as may befall the rest, I would share. Yet not willingly, for life and happiness are dear to me as to you—and they are dear to all these innocent multitudes whom you do now, in the exercise of despotic power, doom to a sudden and abhorred death. Bethink yourself, Aurelian, before it be too late—'

'I have bethought myself of it all,' he replied — 'and were the suffering ten times more, and the blood to be

poured out a thousand times more, I would draw back not one step. The die has been cast ; it has come up as it is, and so must be the game. I listen to no appeal.'

'Not from me,' I replied ; 'but surely you will not deny a hearing to what these people may say in their own defence. That were neither just nor merciful ; nor were it like Aurelian. There is much which by their proper organs they might say to place before you their faith in the light of truth. You have heard what you have received concerning it, chiefly from the lips of Fronto ; and can he know what he has never learned ? or tell it unperverted by prejudices black as night ?'

'I have already said,' rejoined the Emperor, 'that I would hear them, and I will. But it can avail them no more than words uttered in the breath of the tempest that is raging up from the north. Hear them ! This day have I already heard them — from one of those madmen of theirs who plague the streets of Rome. Passing early by the temple of *Æsculapius* — that one which stands not an arrow's flight from the column of *Trajan* — I came upon a dense crowd of all sorts of persons listening to a gaunt figure of a man who spoke to them. Soon as I came against him, and paused on my horse for the crowd to make way, the wild beast who was declaiming, shouted at me at the top of his voice, calling on me to 'hear the word of God which he would speak to me.' Knowing him by such jargon to be a Christian, I did as he desired, and there stood, while he, for my especial instruction, laid bare the iniquities and follies of the Roman worship ; sent the priesthood and all who entered their temples to the infernal regions ; and prophesied against Rome — which he termed Babylon—

that ere so many centuries were gone, her walls would lie even with the ground, her temples moulder in ruins, her language become extinct, and her people confounded with other nations and lost. And all this because I, whom he now called, if I remember the names aright, Ahaz and now Nebuchadnezzar, oppressed the children of God and held them in captivity : while in the same breath he bid me come on with my chains, gibbets, beasts, crosses, and fires, for they were ready, and would rejoice to bear their testimony in the cause of Christ. As I turned to resume my way, his words were ; ‘ Go on, thou man of pride and blood ; go on thy way ! The gates of hell swing open for thee ! Already the arm of the Lord is bared against thee ! the winged lightning struggles in his hand to smite thee ! I hear thy cry for mercy which no one answers — ’ and more, till I was beyond the reach of his owl’s voice. There was an appeal, Piso, from this people ! What think you of it ?

‘ He whom you heard,’ I replied, ‘ I know, and know him to be honest and true ; as loyal a subject too as Rome holds. He is led away by his hot and hasty temper both to do and say what injures not only him, but all who are joined with him, and the cause he defends. He offends the Christians hardly less than others. Judge not all by him. He stands alone. If you would hear one whom all alike confide in, and who may fitly represent the feelings and principles of the whole body of Christians, summon Probus. From him may you learn without exaggeration or concealment, without reproach of others or undue boasting of themselves, what the Christians are in their doctrines and their lives, as citizens

of Rome and loyal subjects of Aurelian, and what, as citizens of heaven and loyal followers of Jesus Christ.'

The Emperor promised to consider it. He had no other reason to deny such favor, but the tedium of listening to what could profit neither him nor others.

We then turned toward the palace, where I saw Livia ; now as silent and sad as, when in Palmyra, she was lively and gay. Not that Aurelian abates the least of his worship, but that the gloom which overshadows him imparts itself to her, and that knowing what has befallen Aurelia, she cannot but feel it to be a possible thing for the blow to fall elsewhere and nearer. Yet is there the same outward show as ever. The palace is still thronged, with not Rome only, but by strangers from all quarters of the empire, anxious to pay their homage at once to the Empress of Rome, to the most beautiful woman in the world — such is the language — and to a daughter of the far-famed Zenobia.

The city is now crowded with travelers of all nations, so much so that the inns can scarce receive them ; and hardly ever before was private hospitality so put to all its resources. With all, and everywhere, in the streets, at the public baths, in the porticos, at the private or public banquet, the Christians are the one absorbing topic. And, at least, this good comes with the evil, that thus the character of this religion, as compared with that of Rome and other faiths, is made known to thousands who might otherwise never have heard of it, or have felt interest enough in it to examine its claims. It leads to a large demand for, and sale of, our sacred books. The copyists can hardly supply them so fast as they are wanted. For in the case of any dispute or conversation,

it is common to hear the books themselves referred to, and then to be called in as witnesses for or against a statement made. And pleasant enough is it to see how clear the general voice is on our side—especially with the strangers—how indignant they are, for the most part, that violence, to the extreme of another Decian persecution, should be so much as dreamed of. Would that the same could be said of our citizens and countrymen ! A large proportion of them indeed embrace the same liberal sentiments, but a greater part, if not for extreme violence, are yet for oppression and suppression ; and I dare not say how many, for all that Aurelian himself designs. Among the lower orders, especially, a ferocious and blood-thirsty spirit breaks out in a thousand ways that fills the bosom both with grief and terror.

The clouds are gathering over us, Fausta, heavy and black with the tempest pent up within. The thunders are rolling in the distance, and each hour coming nearer and nearer. Whom the lightnings shall strike—how vain to conjecture ! Would to God that Julia were anywhere but here ! For, to you I may say it, I cannot trust Aurelian—yes—Aurelian himself I may ; but not Aurelian the tool of Fronto. Farewell.

LETTER IX.

FROM PISO TO FAUSTA.

WHEN I turned from the palace of Aurelian and again took my way towards the Cœlian, I did it in the belief that before the day should end, edicts against the Christians would be published. I found, as I conversed with many whom I met in the way, that from other sources the same opinion had become common. In one manner or another it had come abroad that measures had been resolved upon by the Emperor, and would soon be put in force. Many indeed do not give the least credit to the rumors, and believe that they all spring from the violent language of Fronto, which has been reported as that of Aurelian. You may wonder that there should be such uncertainty respecting a great design like this. But you must remember that Aurelian has of late shrouded himself in a studied obscurity. Not a despot, in the despotic lands of Asia, keeps more secret counsel than he, or leans less upon the opinion or advice of others. All that is done throughout the vast compass of the empire, springs from him alone — all the affairs of foreign and dependent kingdoms are arranged and determined by him. As for Italy and the capital, they are mere playthings in his hand. You ask if the senate does not still exist? I answer, it does; but, as a man exists whom a palsy has made but half alive; the body is there, but the soul is gone, and even the body is asleep.

The senators, with all becoming gravity, assemble themselves at the capitol, and what time they sleep not away the tedious hours in their ivory chairs, they debate such high matters as, 'whether the tax which this year falls heavy upon Capua, by reason of a blast upon the grapes, shall be lightened or remitted !' or 'whether the petition of the Milanese for the construction at the public expense of a granary shall be answered favorably !' or 'whether V. P. Naso shall be granted a new trial after defeat at the highest court !' Not that there is not virtue in the senate, some dignity, some respect and love for the liberties of Rome—witness myself—but that the Emperor has engrossed the whole empire to himself, and nothing is left for that body but to keep alive the few remaining forms of ancient liberty, by assembling as formerly, and taking care of whatever insignificant affairs are intrusted to them. In a great movement like this against the Christians, Aurelian does not so much as recognize their existence. No advice is asked, no coöperation. And the less is he disposed to communicate with them in the present instance perhaps, from knowing so well that the measure would find no favor in their eyes ; but would, on the contrary, be violently opposed. Everything, accordingly, originates in the sovereign will of Aurelian, and is carried into effect by his arm wielding the total power of this boundless empire—being now, what it has been his boast to make it, coëxtensive with its extremest borders as they were in the time of the Antonines. There is no power to resist him ; nor are there many who dare to utter their real opinions, least of all, a senator, or a noble. A beggar in the street may do it with better chance of its being respected, if agreeable

to him, and of escaping rebuke or worse, if it be unpalatable. To the people, he is still, as ever, courteous and indulgent.

There is throughout the city a strange silence and gloom, as if in expectancy of some great calamity; or of some event of dark and uncertain character. The Christians go about their affairs as usual, not ceasing from any labors, nor withdrawing from the scene of danger; but with firm step and serious air keep on their way as if conscious of the great part which it is theirs to act, and resolved that it shall not suffer at their hands. Many with whom I have spoken, put on even a cheerful air as they have greeted me, and after the usual morning's salutation, have passed on as if things were in their usual train. Others with pale face and quivering lip confessed the inward tumult, and that, if they feared naught for themselves, there were those at home, helpless and exposed, for whom the heart bled, and for whom it could not but show signs of fear.

I met the elder Demetrius. His manly and thoughtful countenance — though it betrayed nothing of weakness — was agitated with suppressed emotion. He is a man full of courage, but full of sensibility too. His affections are warm and tender as those of a girl. He asked me 'what I could inform him of the truth of the rumors which were now afloat of the most terrific character.' I saw where his heart was as he spoke, and answered him, as you may believe, with pain and reluctance. I knew, indeed, that the whole truth would soon break upon him — it was a foolish weakness — but I could hardly bring myself to tell him what a few hours

would probably reveal. I told him, however, all that I had just learned from Aurelian himself, and which, as he made no reserve with regard to me, nor enjoined concealment, I did not doubt was fully resolved upon, and would be speedily put in force. As I spoke, the countenance of the Greek grew pale beyond its usual hue of paleness. He bent his head, as in perplexed and anxious thought ; the tears were ready to overflow as he raised it, after a moment, and said,

‘Piso, I am but recently a Christian. I know nothing of this religion but its beauty and truth. It is what I have ever longed for, and now that I possess it I value it far more than life. But,’—he paused a moment—‘I have mingled but little with this people ; I know scarcely any ; I am ignorant of what they require of those who belong to their number in such emergencies. I am ready to die myself, rather than shrink from a bold acknowledgment of what in my heart I believe to be the divinest truth ; but—my wife and my children !—must they too meet these dangers ? My wife has become what I am ; my children are but infants ; a Greek vessel sails to-morrow for Scio, where dwells, in peaceful security, the father of my wife, from whom I received her, almost to his distraction ; her death would be his immolation. Should I offend’—

‘Surely not,’ I replied. ‘If, as I believe will happen, the edicts of the Emperor should be published to-day, put them on board to-night, and let to-morrow see them floating on the Mediterranean. We are not all to stand still and hold our throats to the knife of this imperial butcher.’

‘God be thanked !’ said Demetrius, and grasping my

hand with fervor turned quickly and moved in the direction of his home.

Soon after, seated with Julia and Probus—he had joined me as I parted from Demetrius—I communicated to her all that I had heard at the palace. It neither surprised nor alarmed her. But she could not repress her grief at the prospect spread out before us of so much suffering to the innocent.

‘How hard is this,’ said she, ‘to be called to bear such testimony as must now be borne to truth! These Christian multitudes, so many of whom have but just adopted their new faith and begun to taste of the pleasures it imparts, all enjoying in such harmony and quietness their rich blessings—with many their only blessings—how hard for them, all at once, to see the foundations of their peace broken up, and their very lives clamored for! rulers and people setting upon them as troops of wild beasts! It demands almost more faith than I can boast, to sit here without complaint a witness of such wrong. How strange, Probus, that life should be made so difficult! That not a single possession worth having can be secured without so much either of labor or endurance! I wonder if this is ever to cease on earth?’

‘I can hardly suppose that it will,’ said Probus. ‘Labor and suffering, in some of their forms, seem both essential. My arm would be weak as a rush were it never moved; but exercised, and you see it is nervous and strong; plied like a smith’s, and it grows to be hard as iron and capable of miracles. So it is with any faculty you may select; the harder it is tasked the more worthy it becomes; and without tasking at all, it is worth nothing. So seems to me it is with the whole man. In a

smooth and even lot our worth never would be known, and we could respect neither ourselves nor others. Greatness and worth come only of collision and conflict. Let our path be strewed with roses, and soft southern gales ever blow, and earth send up of her own accord our ready prepared nutriment, and mankind would be but one huge multitude of Sybarites, dissolved in sloth and effeminacy. If no difficulty opposed, no labor exacted, body and mind were dead. Hence it is, we may believe, that man must everywhere labor even for the food which is necessary to mere existence. Life is made dear to us by an instinct — we shrink from nothing as we do from the mere thought of non-existence — but still it is death or toil ; that is the alternative. So that labor is thus insured wherever man is found, and it is this that makes him what he is. Then he is made, moreover, so as to crave not only food but knowledge as much, and also virtue ; but between him and both these objects there are interposed, for the same reason doubtless, mountains of difficulty, which he must clamber up and over before he can bask in the pleasant fields that lie beyond, and then ascend the distant mountain-tops, from which but a single step removes him from the abode of God. Doubt it not, lady, that it is never in vain and for naught that man labors and suffers ; but that the good which redounds is in proportion to what is undergone, and more than a compensation. If, in these times of darkness and fear, suffering is more, goodness and faith are more also. There are Christians, and men, made by such trials, that are never made elsewhere nor otherwise — nor can be ; just as the arm of Hercules could not be

but by the labors of Hercules. What says Macer? Why even this, that God is to be thanked for this danger, for that the church needs it! The brief prosperity it has enjoyed since the time of Valerian and Macrianus, has corrupted it, and it must be purged anew, and tried by fire! I think not that; but I think this; that if suffering ever so extreme is ordained, there will be a virtue begotten in the souls of the sufferers, and abroad through them, that shall prove it not to have been in vain.'

'I can believe what you say,' said Julia, 'at least I can believe in the virtue ascribed to labor, and the collision with difficulty. Suffering is passive; may it not be that we may come to place too much merit in this?'

'It is not to be doubted that we may,' replied Probus. 'The temptation to do so is great. It is easy to suffer. In comparison with labor and duty — life-long labor and duty — it is a light service. Yet it carries with it an imposing air, and is too apt to take to itself all the glory of the Christian's course. Many who have lived as Christians but indifferently have, in the hour of persecution, and in the heat of that hour, rushed upon death and borne it well, and before it extremest torture, and gained the crown of martyrdom and the name of saint — a crown not always without spot — a name not always honorable. He who suffers for Christ must suffer with simplicity — even as he has lived with simplicity. And when he has lived so, and endured the martyr's death at last, that is to be accounted but the last of many acts of duty which are essentially alike — unless it may be that in many a previous conflict over temptation and the world and sin, there was a harder vic-

tory won, and a harder duty done, than when the flames consumed him, or the beasts tare him limb from limb.'

'Yet, Probus,' continued Julia, 'among the humble and the ignorant, where we cannot suppose that vanity could operate, where men have received Christianity only because it seemed to them just the faith they needed, and who then when it has been required that they renounce it, will not do so, but hold steadfastly to what they regard the truth of God, and for it take with meekness and patience all manner of torture, and death itself — there is surely here great virtue! Suffering here has great worth and sets upon the soul the seal of God. Is it not so?'

'Most assuredly it is,' answered Probus. 'O there is no virtue on earth greater than theirs! When dragged from their quiet homes — unknown, obscure, despised, solitary, with not one pitying eye to look on upon their sufferings, with none to record their name, none to know it even — they do, nevertheless, without faltering, keep true to their faith, hugging it to them the closer the more it is tried to tear them asunder — this, this is virtue the greatest on earth! It is a testimony borne to the truth of whatever cause is thus supported, that is daily bringing forth its fruits in the conviction and conversion of multitudes. It is said, that in the Decian persecution, it was the fortitude and patience under the cruelest sufferings of those humble Christians whom no one knew, who came none knew whence, and who were dying out of a pure inward love of the faith they professed, that fell upon the hearts of admiring thousands with more than the force of miracle, and was the cause of the great and sudden growth of our numbers which then took place.

Still, suffering and dying for a faith is not unimpeachable evidence of its truth. There have been those who have died and suffered for idolatries the most abhorred. It is proof, indeed, not at all of truth itself, but only of the deep sincerity of him who professes it.'

'Yes,' replied Julia, 'I see that it is so. But then it is a presumption in behalf of truth, strong almost as miracles done for it, when so many — multitudes — in different ages, in the humblest condition of life, hesitate not to die rather than renounce their faith in a religion like this of Christianity ; which panders to not ~~one~~ of man's passions, appetites or weaknesses, but is the severest censor of morals the world has ever seen ; which requires a virtue and a purity in its disciples such as no philosopher ever dared to impose upon his scholars ; whose only promise is immortality—and that an immortality never to be separated from the idea of retribution as making a part of it. They, who will suffer and die for such a religion, do by that act work as effectively for it, as their master by the signs and wonders which he did. If Christianity were like many of the forms of Paganism ; or if it ministered to the cravings of our sensual nature, as we can conceive a religion might do ; if it made the work of life light, and the reward certain and glorious ; if it relieved its followers of much of the suffering, and fear, and doubt, that oppress others—it would not be surprising that men should bear much for its sake ; and their doing so, for what appealed so to their selfishness, would be no evidence, at all to be trusted, of its truth. But as it is, they who die for it afford a presumption in behalf of it, that appeals to the reason almost or quite with the force of demonstration. So, I

remember well, my reason was impressed by what I used to hear from Paul of the sufferings of the early Christians.'

While Julia had been saying these things, it had seemed to me as if there was an unusual commotion in the streets ; and as she ended I was about to look for the cause of it, when the hasty steps of several running through the hall leading from the main entrance of the house prevented me, and Milo breathless, followed by others of the household, rushed into the apartment where we sat, he exclaiming with every mark of fear and horror upon his countenance,

' Ah ! sir, it is all just as I was told by Curio it would be ; the edicts are published on the capitol. The people are going about the streets now in crowds, talking loud and furiously, and before night they say the Christians will all be delivered to their pleasure.'

Soon as Milo could pause, I asked him ' if he had read or seen the edicts ? '

' No, I have not,' he answered ; ' I heard from Curio what they were to be.'

I told Julia and Probus that such I did not believe was their tenor. It did not agree with usage, nor with what I had gathered from Aurelian of his designs. But that their import was probably, at present, no more than deprivation of a portion of their freedom and of some of their privileges. It was the purpose of Aurelian first to convert back again the erring multitudes to Paganism, for which time must be granted.

But my words had no effect to calm the agitation of our slaves, who, filled with terror at the reports of Milo, and at the confusion in the streets, had poured into the

room, and were showing in a thousand ways their affection for us, and their concern. Some of this number are Christians, having been made so by the daily conversations which Julia has had with them, and the instruction she has given them in the gospels. Most however are still of that religion in which they were reared, as they are natives of the East, of the North, or of Africa. But by all, with slight differences, was the same interest manifested in our safety. They were ready to do anything for our protection ; and chiefly urgent were they that we should that very night escape from Rome — they could remain in security and defend the palace. When they had thus in their simple way given free expression to their affections, I assured them that no immediate danger impended, but even if it did, I should not fly from it, but should remain where I was ; that the religion for which I might suffer was worth to those who held it a great deal more than mere life — we could easily sacrifice life for it, if that should be required. Some seemed to understand this — others not ; but they then retired, silent and calm, because they saw that we were so.

Soon as they were withdrawn, I proposéd to Probus that we should go forth and learn the exact truth. We accordingly passed to the street, which, as it is one that forms the principal avenue from this part of the city to the capitol, we found alive with numbers greater than usual, with their faces turned toward that quarter. We joined them and moved with them in the same direction. It was a fearful thing, Fausta, even to me, who am rarely disturbed by any event, to listen to the language which fell on my ear on all sides from the lips of

beings who wore the same form as myself, and with me have a right to the name of man. It was chiefly that of exultation and joy, that at length the power of the state was about to strike at the root of this growing evil — that one had taken hold of the work who would not leave it, as others had, half accomplished, but would finish it, as he had every other to which he had put his hand.

‘Now we shall see,’ cried one, ‘what he whose hand bears the sword of a true soldier can do, and whether Aurelian, who has slain more foes of Rome abroad than emperor before ever did, cannot do as well by enemies at home.’

‘Never doubt it,’ said another. ‘Before the ides of the month now just come in, not a Christian will be seen in the streets of Rome. They will be swept out as clean, as by Varus they now are of other filth. The Prefect is just the man for the times. Aurelian could not have been better matched.’

‘Lucky this,’ said still another as he hurried away, ‘is it not? Three vessels arrived yesterday stowed thick with wild beasts from Africa and Asia. By the gods! there will be no starving for them now. The only fear will be that gorged so they will lose their spirit.’

‘I don’t fear that,’ said his older companion. ‘I remember well the same game twenty-five years ago. The fact was then that the taste of human blood whetted it for more and more, and, though glutted, their rage seemed but to become more savage still; so that, though hunger was fed to the full, and more, they fell upon fresh victims with increased fury — with a sort of madness as it were. Such food, ’tis said, crazes them.’

Others were soon next us from whom I heard,

‘Let every soul perish. I care not for that ; or rather I do. Let all die I say ; but not in this savage way. Let it be done by a proper accusation, trial, and judgment. Let profession of atheism be death by a law, and let the law be executed, and the name will soon die. Inevitable death under a law for any one who assumes the name, would soon do the work of extermination—better than this universal slaughter which, I hear, is to be the way. Thousands are then overlooked in the blind popular fury ; the work by and by ceases through weariness ; it is thought to be completed—when lo ! as the first fury of the storm is spent, they come forth from their hiding-places, and things are but little better than before.’

‘I think with you,’ said the younger companion of him who had just spoken ; ‘and besides, Romans need not the further instruction in the art of assassination, which such a service would impart. Already nothing comes so like nature to a Roman as to kill ; kill something—if not a beast, a slave—if there is no slave at hand, a Christian—if no Christian, a citizen. One would think we sucked in from our mothers not milk but blood—the blood too of our Parent Wolf. If the state cannot stand secure, as our great men say, but by the destruction of this people, in the name of the gods, let the executioners do the work, not our sons, brothers, and fathers. So too, I say, touching the accursed games at the Flavian and elsewhere. What is the effect but to make of us a nation of man-butchers ? as, by the gods, we already are. If the gods send not something or

somebody to mend us, we shall presently fall upon one another and exterminate ourselves.'

'Who knows but it is this very religion of the Christians that has been sent for that work?' said a third who had joined the two. 'The Christians are famed for nothing more than for their gentleness, and their care of one another — so, at least, I hear.'

'Who knows, indeed?' said the other. 'If it be so, pity it were not found out soon. Aurelian will make short work with them.'

In the midst of such conversation, which on every side caught our ears as we walked silently along, we came at length to the neighborhood of the capitol; but so great was the throng of the people, who in Rome have naught else to do but to rush together upon every piece of news, that we could not even come within sight of the building, much less of the parchment.

We accordingly waited patiently to learn from some who might emerge from the crowd what the precise amount of the edicts might be. We stood not long, before one struggling and pushing about at all adventures, red and puffing with his efforts, extricated himself from the mass, and adjusting his dress which was half torn from his back, began swearing and cursing the Emperor and his ministers for a parcel of women and fools.

'What is it?' we asked, gathering about him. 'What have you seen? Did you reach the pillar?'

'Reach it? I did; but my cloak, that cost yesterday ten good aurelians, did not, and here I stand cloakless —'

'Well, but the edicts.'

'Well, but the edicts! Be not in a hurry, friend — they are worth not so much as my cloak. Blank parch-

ment were just as good. I wonder old 'sword-in-hand' didn't hang up a strip — 'twould have saved the expense of a scrivener. If any of you hear of a cloak found hereabouts, or any considerable part of one, blue without, lined with yellow, and trimmed with gold, please to note the name sewed on beneath the left shoulder, and send it according to the direction and your labor shall not be lost.'

'But the edicts — the edicts.'

'O the edicts! why they are just this; the Christians are told that they must neither assemble together in their houses of worship to hear their priests, nor turn the streets into places of worship in their stead; but leave off all their old ways just as fast as they can and worship the gods. There's an edict for you!'

'Who is this?' said one to Probus.

'I do not know; he seems sadly disappointed at the Emperor's clemency as he deems it.'

But what Probus did not know, another who at the moment came up, did; exclaiming, as he slapped the disappointed man on the shoulder,

'What, old fellow, you here? always where mischief is brewing. But who ever saw you without Nero and Sylla? What has happened? and no cloak either?'

'Nero and Sylla are in their den — for my cloak I fear it is in a worse place. But come, give me your arm, and let us return. I thought a fine business was opening, and so ran up to see. But it's all a sham.'

'It's only put off,' said his companion, as they walked away; 'your dogs will have enough to do before the month is half out — if Fronto knows anything.'

'That is one, I see,' said he who had spoken to Probus, 'who breeds hounds for the theatres — I thought I

had seen him before. His ordinary stock is not less than five hundred blood-hounds. He married the sister of the gladiator Sosia. His name is Hanno.'

Having heard enough, we turned away and sought again the Cœlian. You thus see, Fausta, what Rome is made of, and into what hands we may all come. Do you wonder at my love of Christianity? at my zeal for its progress? Unless it prosper, unless it take root and spread through this people, their fate is sealed, to my mind, with the same certainty as if I saw their doom written upon the midnight sky in letters of fire. Their own wickedness will break them in pieces and destroy them. It is a weight beneath which no society can stand. It must give way in general anarchy and ruin. But my trust is that, in spite of Aurelian and of all other power, this faith will go on its way, and so infuse itself into the mass as never to be dislodged, and work out its perfect ultimate regeneration.

By this decree of the Emperor then, which was soon published in every part of the capital, the Christians are prohibited from assembling together for purposes of worship, their churches are closed, and their preachers silenced.

One day intervenes between this, and the first day of the week, the day on which the Christians as you may perhaps know assemble for their worship. In the meantime it will be determined what course shall be pursued.

Those days have passed, Fausta, and before I seal my letter I will add to it an account of them.

Immediately upon the publication of the Emperor's decrees, the Christians throughout the city communicated

with each other, and resolved, their places of worship being all closed and guarded, to assemble secretly, in some spot to be selected, both for worship and to determine what was to be done, if anything, to shield themselves from the greater evils which threatened. The place selected was the old ruins where the house of Macer stands. 'There still remains,' so Macer urged, 'a vast circular apartment partly below and partly above the surface of the ground, of massy walls, without windows, remote from the streets, and so surrounded by fallen walls and columns as to be wholly buried from the sight. The entrance to it was through his dwelling, and the rooms beyond. Resorting thither when it should be dark, and seeking his house singly and by different avenues among the ruins, there would be little chance of observation and disturbance.' Macer's counsel was accepted.

On the evening of the first day of the week — a day which since I had returned from the East to Rome had ever come to me laden with both pleasure and profit — I took my way under cover of a night without star or moon, and doubly dark by reason of clouds that hung black and low, to the appointed place of assembly. The cold winds of autumn were driving in fitful blasts through the streets, striking a chill into the soul as well as the body. They seemed ominous of that black and bitter storm that was even now beginning to break in sorrow and death upon the followers of Christ. Before I reached the ruins the rain fell in heavy drops, and the wind was rising and swelling into a tempest. It seemed to me, in the frame I was then in, better than a calm. It was moreover a wall of defence against such as might be disposed to track and betray us.

Entering by the door of Macer's cell, I passed through many dark and narrow apartments, following the noise of the steps of some who were going before me, till at length I emerged into the vaulted hall spoken of by Macer. It was lofty and spacious, and already filled with figures of men and women, whom the dim light of a few lamps, placed upon the fragments of the fallen architecture, just enabled me to discern and distinguish from the masses of marble and broken columns which strewed the interior, which, when they afforded a secure footing, were covered with the assembled worshippers. The footsteps of those who were the last to enter soon died away upon the ear, and deep silence ensued, unbroken by any sound save that of the sighs and weeping of such as could not restrain their feelings.

It was interrupted by the voice of one who said,

‘That the Christians of Rome were assembled here by agreement to consult together concerning their affairs, which now, by reason of the sudden hostility of Aurelian, set on by the Pagan priesthood, had assumed a dark and threatening aspect. It was needful so to consult; that it might be well ascertained whether no steps could be taken to ward off the impending evil, and if not, in what manner and to what extent we might be able to protect ourselves. But before this be done,’ he continued, ‘let us all first with one heart seek the blessing of God. To-day, Christians, for the first time within the memory of the younger portion of this assembly, have we by the wicked power of the state been shut out of those temples where we have been wont to offer up our seventh day worship. Here, in this deep cavern, there is none to a-

alarm or interrupt. Let us give our first hour to God. So shall the day not be lost, nor the enemy wholly prevail.'

'That is right,' said another. 'It is what we all wish. Let Probus speak to us and pray for us.'

'Felix ! Felix !' cried other voices in different parts of the room.

'Not so, but Probus ! Probus !' shouted a far greater number.

'Who does not know,' cried a shrill voice elevated to its utmost pitch, 'that Probus is a follower of Paul of Samosata ?'

'And who does not know,' responded he who had first spoken, 'that Felix follows after Plato and Plotinus ? Pagans both !'

'And what,' said the sharp voice of Macer, 'what if both be true ? who dare say that Felix is not a Christian ?—who dare say that Probus is not a Christian ? and if they are Christians, who shall dare to say they may not speak to Christians ? Probus was first asked, and let Probus stand forth.'

The name of Probus was then uttered as it were by the whole assembly.

As he moved toward a more central and elevated spot, the same mean and shrill voice that had first charged him, again was heard, advising that no hymn nor chant be sung ; 'the Roman watch is now abroad, and despite the raging of the storm their ears may catch the sound and the guard be upon us.'

'Let them come then !' shouted Macer. 'Let them come ! Shall any fear of man or of death frighten us away from the worship of God ? What death more glorious than if this moment those doors gave way and the

legions of Aurelian poured in ? Praise God and Christ, Christians, in the highest note you can raise, and let no cowardice seal your lips nor abate your breath.'

The voice of Probus, now heard in prayer, brought a deep silence upon the assembly, and I would fain believe, harmony and peace also into the spirits of all who were there. It was a service deeply moving and greatly comforting. Whatever any who were present might have thought of the principles of Probus, all must have been penetrated and healed by that devout and benevolent temper that was so manifest in the sentiments he uttered, and in the very tones of his voice.

No sooner had he ended his prayer than the voice of Macer broke forth, commencing a chant commonly heard in the churches and with which all were familiar. His voice, louder than that of the storm and shriller than the blast of a war-trumpet, rang through the vast apartment, and inspiring all who were there with the same courage that possessed himself, their voices were instinctively soon joined with his, and the hymn swelled upward with a burst of harmony that seemed as if it might reach Heaven itself. Rome and its legions were then as if they did not exist. God only was present to the mind, and the thoughts with which that hymn filled it. Its burden was like this :

' O God almighty, God of Christ our Lord, arise and defend thy people. The terrors of death are around us, the enemies of truth and thy Son assail us, and we faint and are afraid. Their hosts are encamped against us ; they are ready to devour us. Our hope is in thee : Strengthen and deliver us. Arise, O God, and visit us with thy salvation.'

These, and words like them, repeated with importunity and dwelt upon, the whole soul pouring itself out with the notes, while tears ran down the cheeks of those who sang—the sign not of weakness but of the strength of those affections which bound their hearts to God, to Christ, and to one another—it seemed as if such words and so uttered could not but draw a blessing down. As the hymn drew to a close and the sounds died away, deep silence again fell upon the assembly. The heart had been relieved by the service; the soul had been rapt and borne quite away; and by a common feeling an interval of rest ensued, which by each seemed to be devoted to meditation and prayer. This, when it had lasted till the wants of each had been satisfied, was broken by the voice of Probus.

What he said was wonderfully adapted to infuse fresh courage into every heart, and especially to cheer and support the desponding and the timid. He held up before them the great examples of those who, in the earlier ages of the church, had offered themselves as sacrifices upon the same altar upon which the great head of the Christians had laid down his life. He made it apparent how it had ever been through suffering of some kind on the part of some, that great benefits had been conferred upon mankind; that they who would be benefactors of their race must be willing cheerfully to bear the evil and suffering that in so great part constitutes that office; and was it not a small thing to suffer, and that in the body only, and but for a moment, if by such means great and permanent blessings to the souls of men might be secured, and remotest ages of the world made to rejoice and flourish through the effects of their labors? Every

day of their worship they were accustomed to hear sung or recited the praises of those who had died for Christ and truth ; men of whom the world was not worthy, and who, beautiful with the crown of martyrdom, were now of that glorious company who, in the presence of God, were chanting the praises of God and the Lamb. Who was not ready to die, if it were so ordained, if by such death truth could be transmitted to other ages ? What was it to die to-day rather than to-morrow — for that was all—or this year rather than the next, if one's death could be made subservient to the great cause of Christ and his gospel ? What was it to die by the sword of a Roman executioner, or even to be torn by wild beasts, if by suffering so the soul became allied to reformers and benefactors of all ages ? And besides, what evil after all was it in the power of their enemies to inflict ? They could do no more than torment and destroy the body. They could not touch nor harm the soul. By the infliction of death itself they did but hasten the moment when they should stand clothed in shining garments in the presence of the Father. ‘The time has come, Christians,’ he then said, ‘when, in the providence of God, you are called upon to be witnesses of the faith which you profess in Christ. After many years of calm, a storm has arisen, which begins already to be felt in the violence with which it beats upon our heads. Almost ever since the reign of Decius have we possessed our borders in quietness. Especially under Gallienus and Claudius, and during these nearly four years of Aurelian, have we enjoyed our faith and our worship with none to alarm or oppress us. The laws of the empire have

been as a wall of defence between us and the fierce and bloody spirit of Pagan superstition. They who would have willingly assailed and destroyed us have been forcibly restrained by wise and merciful enactments. During this season of repose our numbers have increased, we have been prosperous and happy. Our churches have multiplied, and all the signs of an outward prosperity have been visible in all parts of this vast empire. Would to God I could say that while numbers and wealth have been added to the church, it had grown in grace and in the practice of the virtues of the gospel in the same proportion ! But I cannot. The simplicity and purity of the first ages are no longer to be seen among us. We no longer emulate the early apostles and make them our patterns. We rather turn to the Pagan and Jewish priesthood, and in all that pertains to the forms of our worship mould ourselves upon them ; and in all that pertains to opinion and doctrine we turn to the philosophers, and engraft, whatever of their mysteries and subtleties we can, upon the plain and simple truth of Jesus. We have departed far, very far, from the gospel standard, both in practice and in faith. We need, Christians, to be brought back. We have gone astray—we have almost worshipped other gods,—it is needful that we return in season to our true allegiance. I dare not say, Christians, that the calamity which now impends is a judgment of God upon our corruptions ; we know not what events are of a judicial character, they have upon them no signature which marks them as such ; but this we may say, that it will be no calamity, but a benefit and a blessing rather, if it have the effect to show us our errors, and cause us to retrace our steps. Aurelian, enemy though we call

him, may prove our benefactor ; he may scourge us, but the sufferings he inflicts may bring healing along with them, being that very medicine which the sick soul needs. Let us meet then this new and heavy trial as a part of the providence of God, as a part of that mysterious plan — the lines of which are in so great part hidden from our eyes — by which he educates his children, and at the same time, and by the same means, prepares and transmits to future generations the richest blessings. If we, Christians, suffer for the cause of truth, if our blood is poured out like water, let us remember that it serves to fertilize that soil out of which divine nutriment shall grow for generations yet unborn, whom it shall nourish up unto a better life. Let your hearts then be strong within you ; faint not, nor fear ; God will be with you and his Spirit comfort you.

‘ But why do I say these things ? Why do I exhort you to courage ? For when was it known that the followers of Christ shrunk from the path of duty, though it were evidently the path of death ? When and in what age have those been wanting who should bear witness to the truth, and seal it with their blood ? There have been those who in time of persecution have fallen away — but for one apostate there have been a thousand martyrs. We have been, I may rather affirm, too prodigal of life — too lavish of our blood. There has been, in former ages, not only a willingness, a readiness to die for Christ, but an eagerness. Christians have not waited to be searched for and found by the ministers of Roman power ; they have thrust themselves forward ; they have gone up of their own accord to the tribunal and proclaimed their faith, and invited the death at

which nature trembles and revolts. But shall we blame this divine ardor ? this more than human contempt of suffering and death ? this burning zeal for the great cause of our Master ? Let us rather honor and revere it as a temper truly divine and of more than mortal force. But let us be just to all. While we honor the courage and self-sacrificing love of so many, let us not require that all should be such, nor cast suspicion upon those who — loving Christ not less in their hearts — shrink from the sufferings in which others glory. Ye need not, Christian men and women, yourselves rush to the tribunal of Varus, ere you can feel that you are Christ's indeed. It is not needful that to be a Christian you must also be a martyr. Ye need not, ye ought not, impatiently seek for the rack and the cross. It is enough if, when sought and found and arraigned, you be found faithful ; if then you deny not nor renounce your Lord, but glory in your name, and with your dying breath shout it forth as that for which you gladly encounter torture and death. Go not forth then seeking the martyr's crown ! Wait till you are called. God knoweth, and he alone, whom he would have to glorify him by that death which is so much more to be coveted than life. Leave all in the hand of Providence. You that are not chosen, fear not that, though later, the gates of Heaven shall not be thrown open for you. Many are the paths that lead to those gates. Besides, shall all rush upon certain death ? Were all martyrs, where then were the seed of the church ? They who live, and by their life, consecrate to holiness and God, show that they are his, do no less for their Master and his cause than do they who die for

that cause. Nay, 't is easier to die well than to live well. The cross which we bear through a long life of faithful service, is a heavier one than that which we bear as we go up our Calvary. Leave all then, Christian men and women, in the hands of God. Seek not death nor life. Shun not life nor death. Say each, "Here, Lord, is thy servant, do with him as shall seem to thee good."

' And now, Christians, how shall we receive the edict of Aurelian ? It silences our preachers, it closes our churches. What now is the duty of the Christians of Rome ? '

Soon as this question was proposed by Probus, many voices from various parts of the room gave in their judgments. At first, the opinions expressed differed on many points ; but as the discussion was prolonged the difference grew less and less, till unanimity seemed to be attained. It was agreed at length, that it was right to conform to the edict so far as this : ' That they would not preach openly in the streets nor elsewhere ; they would, at first, and scrupulously, conform to the edict in its letter and spirit — until they had seen what could be done by appeals both to the Emperor and the senate ; but, maintaining at the same time, that if their appeals were vain, if their churches were not restored to them with liberty to assemble in them as formerly and for the same purposes — then they would take the freedom that was not granted, and use it as before, and abide by the issue ; no power of man should close their mouths as ambassadors of God, as followers of Christ and through him reformers of the world ; they would speak — they would preach and pray, though death were the immediate reward.'

In this determination I heartily agreed as both moderate and yet firm ; as showing respect for the powers that are over us, and at the same time asserting our own rights, and declaring our purpose to stand by them. But so thought not all. For no sooner was the opinion of the assembly declared than Macer broke forth :

‘I have heard,’ said he, ‘the judgment which has been pronounced. But I like it not — I agree not to it. Shall the minister of Christ, the ambassador of God, a messenger from Heaven to earth, hold his peace at the behest of a man, though he be an emperor, or of ten thousand men, were all emperors ? Not though every Christian in Rome subscribed to this judgment, not though every Christian in the world assented to it, would I. Is Christ to receive laws of Aurelian ? Is the cause of God and truth to be postponed to that of the empire ? and posterity to die of hunger because we refuse to till the earth ? We are God’s spiritual husbandmen — the heart of Rome is our field of labor — it is already the eleventh hour — the last days are at hand — and shall we forbear our toil ? shall we withdraw our hand from the plough ? shall we cease to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation because the doors of our churches are closed ? Not so, Christians, by the blessing of God, shall it be with me. While the streets of Rome and her door-stones will serve me for church and pulpit, and while my tongue is left unwrenched from my mouth, will I not cease to declare Jesus Christ and him crucified ! Think you Aurelian will abate his wrath or change his purposes of death, for all your humble suing ? that cringing and fawning will turn aside the messengers of death ? Believe it not. Ye know not Au-

relian. More would ye gain with him, did the faith of the peace-loving Jesus allow it, if ye went forth in battle array and disputed this great question in the streets of Rome sword in hand ! More would ye gain now, if ye sent a word of defiance — denying his right to interpose between God and his people — between Christ and his church — and daring him to do his worst, than by this tame surrender of your rights — this almost base denial of your Master. No sooner shall to-morrow's sun have risen, than on the very steps of the capitol will I preach Christ, and hurl the damnation of God upon this bloody Emperor and his bloody people.'

'O, Macer, Macer ! cease, cease !' cried a woman's voice from the crowd. 'You know not what you say ! Already have your harsh words put new bitterness into Aurelian's heart. Forbear, as you love Christ and us.'

'Woman —' replied Macer, 'for such your voice declares you to be — I do love both Christ and you, and it is because I love you that I aim to set aside this faithless judgment of the Roman Christians. But when I say I love you and the believers in Rome, I mean your souls, not your bodies. I love not your safety, nor your peace, nor your outward comforts ; your houses, nor your wealth, nor your children, nor your lives, nor anything that is yours which the eye can see or the hands handle. I love your souls, and, beside them, nothing. And while it is them I love, and for them am bound in the spirit as a minister of Christ, I may not hold my peace, nor hide myself, for that there is a lion in the path ! As a soldier of the cross I will never flee. Though at the last day I hear no other word of praise from Him the judge — and no other shall I hear, for my Pagan sins

weigh me down — down — help, Lord ! or I perish ! — ' Macer's voice here took the tone of deepest agony ; he seemed for a time wholly lost, standing still, with outstretched arms and uplifted eye. After a long pause he suddenly resumed. ' What did I say ? — It was this : though I hear no other word of praise from my judge as I stand at his judgment-seat, I trust I shall hear this, that I did not flee nor hide myself, that I was no coward, but a bold and fearless soldier of the cross, ready at any time and at all times to suffer for the souls of my brethren.'

' Think not, Macer,' said Probus, ' that we shrink at the prospect of danger. But we would be not only bold and unshrinking, but wise and prudent. There is more than one virtue goes to make the Christian man. We think it right and wise first to appeal to the Emperor's love of justice. We think it might redound greatly to our advantage if we could obtain a public hearing before Aurelian, so that from one of our own side he, with all the nobility of Rome, might hear the truth in Christ, and then judge whether to believe so was hurtful to the state, or deserving of torture and death.'

' As well, Probus,' replied Macer, ' might you preach the faith of Christ in the ear of the adder ! to the very stones of the highways ! Aurelian turn from a settled purpose ! ha ! ha ! you have not served, Probus, under him in Gaul and Asia as others have. Never did the arguments of his legions and his great officers on the other side, serve but to intrench him the more impreguably in his own. He knows not what the word change means. But were this possible, and of good hope, it shows not that plain and straight path to which my spirit points, and which therefore I must travel. Is it right to

hearken to man rather than God? That to me is the only question. Shall Aurelian silence the ambassador of God and Christ? Shall man wrestle and dispute it with the Almighty? God, or Aurelian, which shall it be? To me, Christians, it would be a crime of deeper dye than the errors of my Pagan youth, did I chain my tongue, were it but for an hour, at the command of Aurelian. I have a light within, and it is that I must obey. I reason not—I weigh not probabilities—I balance not argument against argument—I feel! and that I take to be the instinct of God—the inspiration of his holy Spirit—and as I feel so am I bound to act.'

It was felt to be useless to reason with this impetuous and self-willed man. He must be left to work out his own path through the surrounding perils, and bear whatever evil his violent rashness might draw upon his head. Yet his are those extreme and violent opinions and feelings which are so apt to carry away the multitude, and it was easy to see that a large proportion of the assembly went with him. Another occasion was given for their expression.

When it had been determined that the edicts should be observed so far as to refrain from all public preaching and all assembling together, till the Emperor had been first appealed to, it then became a question in what manner he should be approached, and by whom, in behalf of the whole body. And no sooner had Macer ceased, than the same voice which had first brought those charges against Probus was again heard—the voice as I have since learned of a friend of Felix, and an exorcist.

'If it be now determined,' said the voice, 'that we ap-

peal to the clemency of the Emperor in order to avert from our heads the evil that seems to be more than threatened, let it be done by some one who in his faith may fitly represent the great body of Christ's followers. Whether the Emperor shall feel well inclined toward us or not, will it not greatly depend upon the manner in which the truth in Christ shall be set forth, and whether by means of the principles and doctrines that shall be shown to belong to it and constitute it, it shall be judged by him to be of hurtful or beneficial tendency? Now it is well known to all how variously Christ is received and interpreted in Rome. As received by some, his gospel is one thing; as received by others, it is another and quite a different thing. Who can doubt that our prospect of a favorable hearing with Aurelian will be an encouraging one in the proportion that he shall perceive our opinions to agree with those which have already been advanced in the schools of philosophy — especially in that of the divine Plato. This agreement and almost identity has, ever since the time of Justin, been pointed out and learnedly defended. They who perceive this agreement, and rest in it as their faith, now constitute the greater part of the Christian world. Let him then who is to bespeak for us the Emperor's good-will be, as in good sooth he ought to be, of these opinions. As to the declaration that has been made that one is as much a Christian as another, whatever the difference of faith may be, I cannot receive it; and he who made the declaration, I doubt would scarce abide by it, since as I learn he is a worshipper and follower of that false-hearted interloper Novatian. The puritans least of all are apt to regard with favor those who hold not with them. Let

Felix then, who, if any now living in Rome may stand forward as a specimen of what Christ's religion is in both its doctrine and its life — let Felix plead our cause with Aurelian.'

The same difference of feeling and opinion manifested itself as before. Many voices immediately cried out, 'Yes, yes, Felix, let Felix speak for us.' While others from every part of the room were heard shouting out, 'Probus, Probus, let Probus be our advocate !'

At length the confusion subsided as a single voice made itself heard above the others and caught their attention, saying,

'If Felix, O Christians, as has just been affirmed, represents the opinions which are now most popular in the Christian world, at least here in Rome, Probus represents those which are more ancient —' He was instantly interrupted.

'How long ago,' cried another, 'lived Paul of Samosata ?'

'When died the heretic Sabellius ?' added still another.

'Or Praxeas ?' said a third, 'or Theodotos ? or Artemon ?'

'These,' replied the first, soon as he could find room for utterance — 'these are indeed not of the earliest age, but they from whom they learned their faith are of that age, namely, the apostles and the great master of all.'

'Heresy,' cried out one who had spoken before, 'always dates from the oldest ; it never has less age nor authority than that of Christ.'

'Christians ! Christians !' Macer's stentorian voice was now heard towering above the tumult, 'what is it

ye would have ? What are these distinctions about which ye dispute ? What have they to do with the matter now in hand ? How would one doctrine or the other in such matters weigh with Aurelian more than straws or feathers ? But if these are stark naught, and less than naught, there are other questions pertinent to the time, nay, which the time forces upon us, and about which we should be well agreed. A new age of persecution has arisen, and the church is about to be sifted, and the wheat separated from the chaff—the first to be gathered into the garners of God, the last to be burnt up in fire unquenchable. Now is it to be proved who are Christ's, and who are not—who will follow him bearing their cross to some new Calvary, and who, saving their lives, shall yet lose them. Who knows not the evil that, in the time of Decius, yes, and before and since too, fell upon the church from the so easy reception and restoration of those who, in an hour of weakness and fear, denied their master and his faith, and bowed the knee to the gods of Rome ? Here is the danger against which we are to guard ; from this quarter—not from any other of vain jargon concerning natures, essences, and modes of being—are we to look for those fatal inroads to be made upon the purity of the gospel, that cannot but draw along with them corruption and ruin. Of what stuff will the church then be made, when they who are its ministers, deacons and bishops, shall be such as, when danger showed itself, relapsed into idolatry, and, soon as the clouds had drifted by, and the winds blew soft, came forth again into the calm sunshine, renounced their idolatry, and again professing Christ, were received to the arms of the church, and

even to the communion of the body and blood of our Lord? Christians, the great Novatian is he to whom we owe what purity the church yet retains, and it is in allegiance to him —'

'The great Novatian!' exclaimed a priest of the Roman church, 'great only in his infamy! Himself an apostate once, he sought afterwards, having been received himself back again to the church upon his repentance, to bury his shame under a show of zeal against such as were guilty of the same offence. His own weakness or sin, instead of teaching him compassion, served but to harden his heart. Is this the man to whose principles we are to pledge ourselves? Were his principles sound in themselves, we could hardly take them from such a source. But they are false. They are in the face of the spirit and letter of the gospel. What is the character of the religion of Christ, if it be not mercy? Yet this great Novatian, to those who like Peter have fallen—Peter whom his master received and forgave—denies all mercy! and for one offence, however penitence may wring the soul, cuts them off forever like a rotten branch from the body of Christ! Is this the teacher whose follower should appeal for us to the Roman Emperor?'

'I seek not,' Macer began to say, 'to defend the bishop of Rome —'

'Bishop!' cried the other, 'bishop! who ever heard that Novatian was bishop of Rome? But who has not heard that that wicked and ambitious man through envy of Cornelius, and resolved to supplant him, caused himself to be ordained bishop by a few of that order, weak

and corrupt men, whom he bribed to the bad work, but who, corrupt as they were, and bribed as they were, it was first needful to make drunk before conscience would allow them by such act eternally to disgrace themselves and the church —'

'Lies and slanders all,' cried Macer and others with him, in the same breath and with their utmost voice. The greatest confusion prevailed. A thousand contradictory cries were heard. In the midst of the uproar the name of Macer was proclaimed by many as that of one who would best assert and defend the Christian cause before Aurelian. But these were soon overborne and silenced by a greater number, who now again called upon Probus to fill that office.

Probus seemed not sorry that, his name being thus tumultuously called out, he had it again in his power to speak to the assembly. Making a sign accordingly that he would be heard, he said,

'That he coveted not the honorable office of appealing for them to the Emperor of Rome. It would confer more happiness a thousand fold, Christians, if I could by any words of mine put harmony and peace into your hearts, than if I might even convert a Roman emperor. What a scene of confusion and discord is this, at such an hour, when, if ever, our hearts should be drawn closer together by this exposure to a common calamity. Why is it that when at home, or moving abroad in the business of life, your conversation so well becomes your name and faith, drawing upon you even the commendation of your Pagan foes, you no sooner assemble together, as now, than division and quarrel ensue, in such measure, as among our Heathen opponents is never

seen? Why is it, Christians, that when you are so ready to die for Christ, you will not live at peace for him? Honor you not him more by showing that you are of his spirit, that for his name's sake you are willing to bear patiently whatever reproach may be laid upon you, than you do even by suffering and dying for him? The questions you have here agitated are not for this hour and place. What now does it signify whether one be a follower of Paul, of Origen, of Sabellius, or Novatian, when we are each and all so shortly to be called upon to confess our allegiance to neither of these—but to a greater, even Jesus, the master and head of us all! And what has our preference for some of the doctrines of either of these to do with our higher love of Christ and his truth? By such preference is our superior and supreme regard for Jesus and his word vitiated or invalidated? Nay, what is it we then do when we embrace the peculiar doctrine of some great or good man, who has gone before, but embrace that which in a peculiar sense we regard as the doctrine of Christ? We receive the peculiar doctrine of Paul, or Justin, or Origen, not because it is theirs, but because we think they have shown it to be eminently the doctrine of Christ. In binding upon us then the dogmas of any teacher, we ought not to be treated other than as those who, in doing so, are seeking to do the highest honor, not to such teacher, but to Christ. I am charged as a disciple of the bishop of Antioch, and the honored Felix as a disciple of Plato. If I honor Paul of Sambsata, Christians, for any of his truth, it is because I deem him to have discerned clearly the truth as it is in Jesus. My faith is not in him, but in Jesus. And if Felix

honor Plato or Plotinus, it is but because in them he beholds some clearer unfolding — clearer than elsewhere — of the truth in Christ. Are not we then, and all who do the same thing, to be esteemed as those who honor Christ? not deny nor forsake him. And as we all hold in especial reverence some one or another of a former age, through whom as a second master we receive the doctrines of the gospel, ought we not all to love and honor one another, seeing that in the same way we all love and honor Christ? Let love, Christians, mutual honor and love, be the badge of our discipleship, as it was in the first age of the church. Soon, very soon, will you be called to bear testimony to the cause you have espoused, and perhaps seal it with your blood. Be not less ready to show your love to those around you by the promptness with which you lend your sympathy, or counsel, or aid, as this new flood of adversity flows in upon them. But why do I exhort you? The thousand acts of kindness, of charity, of brotherly love, which flow outwards from you in a perpetual stream toward Heathen not less than Christian, and have drawn upon you the admiration even of the Pagan world, is sufficient assurance that your hearts will not be cold when the necessities of this heavier time shall lay upon you their claims. It is only in the public assembly, and in the ardor of debate, that love seems cold and dead. Forget then, now and tomorrow, that you are followers of any other than Christ. Forget that you call yourselves after one teacher or another, and remember only that you are brethren, members of one family, of the same household of faith, owning one master, worshipping one and the same God and Father

of us all. And now, Christians, if you would rather that Felix should defend you before Aurelian, I would also. There is none among us who loves Christ more or better than he, or would more readily lay down his life for his sake.'

Felix however joined with all the others—for all now, after these few words of Probus, seemed of one opinion—in desiring that Probus should appear for the Christians before the Emperor; which he then consented to do. Harmony was once more restored. The differences of opinion, which separated them, seemed to be forgotten, and they mingled as friends and fellow-laborers in the great cause of truth. They who had been harshest in the debate—which was at much greater length, and conducted with much more vehemence than as I have described it—were among the most forward to meet with urbanity those who were in faith, the most distantly removed from them. A long and friendly interview then took place, in which each communed with each, and by words of faith or affection helped to supply the strength which all needed for the approaching conflict. One saw no longer and heard no longer the enthusiastic disputant more bent upon victory than truth, and heedless of the wounds he gave to the heart, provided he convinced the head or silenced the tongue, but instead, those who now appeared no other than a company of neighbors and friends engaged in the promotion of some common object of overwhelming interest.

When in this manner and for a considerable space of time a fit offering had been laid upon the altar of love, the whole assembly again joined together in acts of prayer, and again lifted up their voices in songs of

praise. This duty being performed, we separated and sought the streets. The storm which had begun in violence, had increased, and it was with difficulty that beset by darkness, wind, and rain, I succeeded without injury in finding my way to the Cœlian.

Julia was waiting for me with anxious impatience.

After relating to her the events of the evening, she said,

‘How strange, Lucius, the conduct of such men at such a time ! How could Christians, with the Christian’s faith in their hearts, so lose the possession of themselves — and so violate all that they profess as followers of Jesus ! I confess, if this be the manner in which Christianity is intended to operate upon the character, I am as yet wholly ignorant of it, and desire ever to remain so. But it is not possible that they are right. Nay, they seem in some sort to have acknowledged themselves to have been in the wrong by the last acts of the meeting. This brings to my mind what Paul has often told me of the Christians of the same kind, at which I was then amazed, but had forgotten. I do not comprehend it. I have read and studied the character and the teachings of Jesus, and it seems to me I have arrived at some true understanding — for surely there is little difficulty in doing so — of what he himself was, and of what he wished his followers to be. Would he have recognized his likeness in those of whom you have now told me ?’

‘Yet,’ I replied, ‘there was more of it there in those very persons than at first we might be inclined to think ; and in the great multitude of those who were present, it may have been all there, and was in most, I cannot

doubt. We ought not to judge of this community by the leaders of the several divisions which compose it. They are by no means just specimens, from which to infer the character of all. They are but too often restless, ambitious, selfish men ; seeking their own aggrandizement and their party's, rather than the glory of Christ and his truth. I can conceive of a reception of Christian precept and of the Christian spirit being but little more perfect and complete, than I have found it among the humbler sort of the Christians of Rome. Among them there is to be seen nothing of the temper of violence and bigotry that was visible this evening in the language of so many. They, for the most part, place the religion of Jesus in holy living, in love of one another, and patient waiting for the kingdom of God. And their lives are seen to accord with these great principles of action. Even for their leaders, who are in so many points so different from them, this may be said in explanation and excuse — that from studying the record more than the common people, they come to consider more narrowly in what the religion of Jesus consists, and arriving, after much labor, at what they believe in their hearts to be the precise truth — truth the most vital of any to the power and success of the gospel — this engrosses all their affections, and prompts all their labor and zeal. In the dissemination of this do they alone behold the dissemination of Christianity itself — this being denied or rejected, the gospel itself is. With such notions as fundamental principles of action, it is easy to see with what sincere and virtuous indignation they would be filled toward such as should set at nought and oppose that, which they cherish as the very central

glory and peculiarity of Christianity. These things being so, I can pity and forgive a great deal of what appears to be, and is, so opposite to the true Christian temper, on account of its origin and cause. Especially as these very persons, who are so impetuous, and truculent almost, as partizans and advocates, are, as private Christians, examples perhaps of extraordinary virtue. We certainly know this to be the case with Macer. An apostle was never more conscientious nor more pure. Yet would he, had he power equal to his will, drive from the church all who bowed not the knee to his idol Novatian.'

'But how,' asked Julia, 'would that agree with the offence he justly took at those who quareled with Probus and Felix on account of their doctrine?'

'There certainly would be in such conduct no agreement nor consistency. It only shows how easy it is to see a fault in another, to which we are stone-blind in ourselves. In the faith or errors of Probus and Felix he thought there was nothing that should injure their Christian name, or unfit them for any office. Yet in the same breath he condemned as almost the worst enemies of Christ such as refused honor and adherence to the severe and inhuman code of his master Novatian.'

'But how far removed, Lucius, is all this from the spirit of the religion of Jesus! Allowing all the force of the apologies you may offer, is it not a singular state for the minds and tempers of those to have arrived at, who profess before the world to have formed themselves after the doctrine, and, what is more, after the character of Christ? I cannot understand the process by which it has been done, nor how it is that, without bringing

upon themselves public shame and reproach, such men can stand forth and proclaim themselves not only Christians, but Christian leaders and ministers.'

'I can understand it, I confess, quite as little. But I cannot doubt that as Christianity outgrows its infancy, especially when the great body of those who profess it shall have been formed by it from their youth, and shall not be composed, as now, of those who have been brought over from the opposite and uncongenial regions of Paganism, with much of their former character still adhering to them, Christians will then be what they ought to be who make the life and character of Jesus their standard. Nothing is learned so slowly by mankind as those lessons which enforce mutual love and respect, in which the gospels so abound. We must allow not only years, but hundreds of years, for these lessons to be imprinted upon the general heart of men, and to be seen in all their character and intercourse. But when a few hundred years shall have elapsed, and that is a long allowance for this education to be perfected in, I can conceive that the times of the primitive peace and love shall be more than restored, and that such reproaches as to-night were heard lavished upon one and another will be deemed as little compatible with a Christian profession as would be violence and war. All violence and wrong must cease, as this religion is received, and the ancient superstitions and idolatries die out.'

'What a privilege, to be born and live,' said Julia, 'in those fast approaching years, when Christianity shall alone be received as the religion of this large empire; when Paganism shall have become extinct in Rome,

war and slavery shall cease, and all our people shall be actuated by the same great principles of faith and virtue that governed both Christ and his apostles! A few centuries will witness more and better than we now dream of.'

So we pleased ourselves with visions of future peace and happiness, which Christianity was to convert to reality. To me they are no longer mere visions, but as much realities to be experienced, as the future towering oak is, when I look upon an acorn planted, or as the future man is, when I look upon a little child. If Christianity grows at all, it must grow in such direction. If it do not, it will not be Christianity that grows, but something else that shall have assumed its name and usurped its place. The extension of Christianity is the extension and multiplication as it were of that which constituted Christ himself—it is the conversion of men into his image—or else it is nothing. Then, when this shall be done, what a paradise of peace, and holiness, and love, will not the earth be! Surely, to be used as an instrument in accomplishing such result, one may well regard as an honor and privilege, and be ready to bear and suffer much, if need be, in fulfilling the great office.

I hope I shall not have wearied you by all this exactness. I strictly conform to your injunctions, so that you can complain only of yourself.

We often wish that the time would allow us to escape to you, that we might witness your labors and share them in the rebuilding and reëmbelishing of the city. Rome will never be a home to Julia. Her affections

are all in Syria. I can even better conceive of Zenobia becoming a Roman than Julia. Farewell.

FINDING among the papers of Piso no letter giving any account of what took place immediately after the meeting of the Christians, which, in his last letter, he has so minutely described, I shall here supply, as I may, the deficiency ; and I can do it at least with fidelity, since I was present at the scenes of which I shall speak.

No one took a more lively interest in the condition and affairs of the Christians than Zenobia ; and it is with sorrow that I find among the records of Piso no mention made of conversations had at Tibur while these events were transpiring, at which were present himself, and the princess Julia, the Queen, and, more than once, Aurelian and Livia. While I cannot doubt that such record was made, I have in vain searched for it among those documents which he intrusted to me.

It was by command of the Queen that on the day following that on which the Christians held their assembly at the baths, I went to Rome for the very purpose to learn whatever I could, both at the Gardens and abroad in the city, concerning the condition and probable fate of that people, she desiring more precise information than could be gathered from any of the usual sources of intelligence.

It was apparent to me as I entered the city, and penetrated to its more crowded parts, that somewhat unusual

had taken place, or was about to happen. There were more than the common appearances of excitement among those whom I saw conversing and gesticulating at the corners of streets or the doors of the public baths. This idle and corrupt population seemed to have less than on other occasions to employ their hands, and so gave their time and their conversation to one another, laying no restraint upon the quantity of either. It is an indisputable fact that Rome exists to this day, for any one who will come into Italy may see it for himself, and he cannot reject the testimony of his eyes and ears. But how it exists from year to year, or from day to day, under such institutions, it would puzzle the wisest philosopher, I believe, to tell. Me, who am no philosopher, it puzzles as often as I reflect upon it. I cannot learn the causes that hold together in such apparent order and contentment so idle and so corrupt a people. I have supposed it must be these, but they seem not sufficient : the Prætorian camp without the walls, and the guard, in league with them, within, and the largesses and games proceeding from the bounty of the Emperor. These last, though they are the real sources of their corruption and must end in the very destruction of the city and people, yet, at present, operate to keep them quiet and in order. So long as these bounties are dispensed, so long, such is our innate love of idleness and pleasure, will the mass think it foolish to agitate any questions of right or religion, or any other, by which they might be forfeited. Were these suddenly suspended, all the power of the Prætorian cohorts, I suppose, could not keep peace in Rome. They were now I found occupied by the affairs of the Christians, and waiting impatiently for the orders which

should next issue from the imperial will. The edicts published two days before gave them no employment, nor promised much. They merely laid restraints upon the Christians, but gave no liberty of assault and injury to the Roman.

‘That does not satisfy the people,’ said one to me, at the door of a shop, of whom I had made some inquiry on the subject. ‘More was looked for from the Emperor, for it is well known that he intends the extremest measures, and most are of opinion that, before the day is out, new edicts will be issued. Why he took the course he did of so uncommon moderation ’tis hard to say. All the effect of it is to give the Christians opportunity to escape and hide themselves, so that by the time the severer orders against them are published, it will be impossible to carry them into execution.’

‘Perhaps,’ I said, ‘it was after all his intention to give them a distant warning, that some might, if they saw fit to do so, escape.’

‘I do not believe that,’ he replied ; ‘it will rather, I am of the opinion, be found to have proceeded from the advice of Fronto and Varus, to give to the proceedings a greater appearance of moderation ; which shows into the hands of what owls the Emperor has suffered himself to fall. Nobody ever expected moderation in Aurelian, nor do any but a few as bad as themselves think these wretches deserve it. The only consequence of the present measures will be to increase their swelling insolence and pride, thinking that Aurelian threatens but dares not execute. Before another day, I trust, new

edicts will show that the Emperor is himself. The life of Rome hangs upon the death of these.'

Saying which, with a savage scowl, which showed how gladly he would turn executioner or tormentor in such service, he turned and crossed the street.

I then sought the palace of Piso. I was received in the library, where I found the lady Julia and Piso.

They greeted me as they ever did, rather as if I were a brother than but the servant of Zenobia. But whatever belongs to her, were it but so much as a slave of the lowest office, would they treat with affection at least, if not with reverence. After answering their inquiries after the welfare of the Queen and Faustula, I made mine concerning the condition of the city and the affairs of the Christians, saying, 'that Zenobia was anxious to learn what ground there was, or whether any, to feel apprehension for the safety of that people?'—Piso said, 'that now he did not doubt there was great ground for serious apprehension. It was believed by those who possessed the best means of intelligence, that new edicts of a much severer character would be issued before another day. But that Zenobia need be under no concern either as to himself or Julia, since the Emperor in conversation with him as much as assured him that, whatever might befall others, no harm should come to them.'

He then gave me an account of what the Christians had done in their assembly, agreeing with what is now to be found in the preceding letter.

I then asked whether he thought that the Christian Macer would keep to the declaration he had made, that he would to-day, the edicts notwithstanding, preach in

the streets of Rome ! He replied, that he did not doubt that he would, and that if I wished to know what some of the Christians were, and what the present temper of the people was towards them, I should do well to seek him and hear him.'

'Stand by him, good Nicomachus,' said Julia, 'if at any moment you find that you can be of service to him. I have often heretofore blamed him, but since this murder of Aurelia, and the horrors of the dedication, I hold him warranted, and more than that, in any means he may use, to rouse this guilty people. Perhaps it is only by the use of such remedies as he employs, that the heart of Rome — hardened by ages of sin — can be made to feel. To the milder treatment of Probus, and others like him, it seems for the most part utterly insensible and dead. At least his sincerity, his zeal, and his courage, are worthy of all admiration.'

I assured her that I would befriend him if I could do so with any prospect of advantage, but it was little that one could do against the fury of a Roman mob. I then asked Piso if he would not accompany me ; but he replied, that he had already heard Macer, and was, besides, necessarily detained at home by other cares.

As there was no conjecturing in what part of the city this Christian preacher would harangue the people, and neither the Princess nor Piso could impart any certain information, I gave little more thought to it, but, as I left the palace on the Cœlian, determined to seek the gardens of Sallust, where, if I should not see Aurelian, I might at least pass the earlier hours of the day in an agreeable retreat. I took the street that leads from the Cœlian to the Capitol Hill, as affording a pleasanter

walk — if longer. On the way there, I observed well the signs which were given in the manner and conversation of those whom I met, or walked with, of the events which were near at hand. There is no better index of what a despotic ruler, and yet at the same time a 'people's' despot, will do, than the present will of the people. It was most apparent to me that they were impatient for some quick and vigorous action, no matter how violent, against the Christians. Language the most ferocious met my ear. The moderation and tardiness of the Emperor — of him who had in every thing else been noted for the rapidity of his movements — were frequent subjects of complaint.

'It is most strange,' they said, 'that Aurelian should hesitate in this matter, in truth as if he were afraid to move. Were it not for Fronto, it is thought that nothing would be done after all. But this we may feel sure of, that if the Emperor once fairly begins the work of extermination, he is not the man to stop half way. And there is not a friend of the ancient institutions of religion, but who says that their very existence depends upon — not the partial obstruction of this sect — but upon its actual and total extermination. Who does not know that measures of opposition and resistance, which go but part way and then stop, through a certain unwillingness as it were to proceed to extremes, do but increase the evil they aim to suppress. Weeds that are but mown, come up afterwards only the more vigorously. Their very roots must be torn up and then burned.' Such language was heard on all sides, uttered with utmost violence — of voice and gesture.

I paused, among other curious and busy idlers, at the

door of a smith's shop, which, as I passed slowly by, presented a striking view of a vast and almost boundless interior, blazing with innumerable fires, where laborers half naked — and seeming as if fire themselves, from the reflection from their steaming bodies of the red glare of the furnaces — stood in groups, some drawing forth the bars of heated metal and holding them, while others wielding their cyclopean hammers made the anvils and the vast interior ring with the blows they gave. All around the outside of the shop and in separate places within stood the implements and machines of various kinds which were either made, or were in the process of being put together. Those whom I joined were just within the principal entrance looking upon a fabric of iron consisting of a complicated array of wheels and pulleys, to which the workmen were just in the act of adding the last pieces. The master of the place now approaching and standing with us, while he gave diverse orders to the men, I said to him,

‘What new device may this be? The times labor with new contrivances by which to assist the laborer in his art, and cause iron to do what the arm has been accustomed to perform. But after observing this with care I can make nothing of it. It seems not designed to aid any manufacture of which I have any knowledge.’

The master looked at me with a slighting expression of countenance as much as to say ‘you are a wise one! You must have just emerged from the mountains of Helvetia, or the forests of the Danube.’ But he did not content himself with looks.

‘This, sir?’ said he. ‘This, if you would know it, is a sack — a common instrument of torture — used in all the

prisons of the empire, the use of which is to extract truth from one who is unwilling to speak except compelled ; or, sometimes, when death is thought too slight a punishment, to give it an edge with, just as salt and pepper are thrown into a fresh wound. Some crimes, you must know, were too softly dealt with, were a sharp axe the only instrument employed. Cæsar ! just bring some wires of a good thickness, and we will try this. Now shall you see precisely how it would fare with your own body, were you on this iron frame and Varus standing where I am. There,—Cæsar having in a few moments brought the wires—the body you perceive is confined in this manner.—You observe there can be no escape and no motion. Now at the word of the judge, this crank is turned. Do you see the effect upon the wire ? Imagine it your body and you will have a lively idea of the instrument. Then at another wink or word from Varus, these are turned, and you see that another part of the body, the legs or arms as it may be, are subjected to the same force as this wire, which as the fellow keeps turning you see—strains, and straightens, and strains, till—crack !—there !—that is what we call a rack. A most ingenious contrivance and of great use. This is going up within the hour to the hall of the Prefect.’

‘It seems,’ I remarked, ‘well contrived indeed for its object. And what,’ I asked, ‘are these which stand here ? Are they for the same or a similar purpose ?’

‘Yes—these, sir, are different and yet the same. They are all for purposes of torture, but they vary infinitely in the ingenuity with which they severally inflict pain and death. That is esteemed in Rome the most perfect instrument which, while it inflicts the most ex-

quisite torments, shall at the same time not early, assail that which is a vital part, but, you observe, prolong life to the utmost. Some, of an old-fashioned structure, with a clumsy and bungling machinery—here are some sent to me as useless—long before the truth could be extracted, or much more pain inflicted than would accompany beheading, destroyed the life of the victim. Those which I build—and I build for the State—are not to be complained of in that way. Varus is curious enough, I can assure you, in such things. All these that you see here, of whatever form or make, are for him and the hall of justice. They have been all refitted and repaired—or else they are new.'

'How is it possible,' I asked, 'so many could be required in one place?'

'Surely,' said the master, 'you must just have dropt down in Rome from Britain, or Scythia, or the moon! Didst ever hear of a people called Galilean or Christian? Perhaps the name is new to you.'

'No, I have heard it.'

'Well, these are for them. As you seem new in the city and to our Roman ways, walk a little farther in and I will show you others, which are for the men and the boys at such time as the slaughter of this people shall become general. For you must know,—although it is not got widely abroad yet—that by and by the whole city is to be let loose upon them. That is the private plan of the Emperor. Every good citizen, it will be expected, will do his share in the work, till Rome shall be purged. Aurelian does nothing by halves. It is in view of such a state of things that I have prepared an immense armory—if I may call it so—of every sort of

cheap iron tool — I have the more costly also — to meet the great demand that will be made. Here they are ! commend now my diligence, my patriotism, and my foresight ! Some of my craft will not engage in this work : but it exactly jumps with my humor. Any that you shall choose of these, sir, you shall have cheap, and they shall be sent to your lodgings.'

I expressed my gratitude, but declined the offer.

After wandering a little longer around the huge workshop, I took my leave of its humane master, still entreating me to purchase, and, as I entered again the street, turned towards the capitol. My limbs were sympathising with those wires throughout the rest of the day.

I had forgotten Macer, and almost my object in coming abroad, and was revolving various subjects in my mind, my body only being conscious of the shocks which now and then I received from persons meeting or passing me, when I became conscious of a sudden rush along the street in the direction of the capitol, which was now but a furlong from where I was. I was at once awake. The people began to run, and I ran with them by instinct. At length it came into my mind to ask why we were running ? One near me replied,

'O, it's only Macer the Christian, who, 'tis said, in spite of the edict, has just made for the steps of the capitol, followed by a large crowd.'

On the instant I outstripped my companion, and turning quickly the corner, where the street in which I was crossed the hill, I there beheld an immense multitude gathered around the steps of the capitol, and the tall form of Macer just ascending them. Resolved to be near him, I struggled and forced my way into the mass,

til I found myself so far advanced that I could both hear and be heard by him, if I should find occasion to speak, and see the expression of his countenance. It was to me, as he turned round toward the people, the most extraordinary countenance I ever beheld. It seemed as if once it had been fiercer than the fiercest beast of the forest, while through that was now to be discerned the deep traces of grief, and an expression which seemed to say, "I and the world have parted company. I dwell above." His two lives and his two characters were to be read at once in the strong and deep-sunk lines of a face that struck the beholder at once with awe, with admiration, and compassion.

The crowd was restless and noisy ; heaving to and fro like the fiery mass of a boiling crater. A thousand exclamations and imprecations filled the air. I thought it doubtful whether the rage which seemed to fill a great proportion of those around me would so much as permit the Christian to open his mouth. It seemed rather as if he would at once be dragged from where he stood to the Prefect's tribunal, or hurled from the steps and sacrificed at once to the fury of the populace. But, as the cries of his savage enemies multiplied, the voices of another multitude were lifted up in his behalf, which were so numerous and loud, that they had the effect of putting a restraint upon the others. It was evident that Macer could not be assailed without leading to a general combat. All this while Macer stood unmoved, and calm as the columns of the capitol itself — waiting till the debate should be ended and the question decided — a question of life or death to him. Upon the column

immediately on his right hand hung, emblazoned with gold, and beautiful with all the art of the chirographer, the edict of Aurelian. It was upon parchment, within a brazen frame.

Soon as quiet was restored, so that any single voice could be heard, one who was at the foot of the steps and near the preacher cried out to him,

‘Well, old fellow, begin ! thy time is short.’

‘Young man,’ he replied, ‘I was once old in sin, for which God forgive me ! — now I am old in the love of Christ, for which God be thanked ! — but in years I am but forty. As for time ! — I think only of eternity.’

‘Make haste, Macer !’ cried another voice from the crowd. ‘Varus will soon be here.’

‘I believe you,’ replied the soldier ; ‘but I am ready for him. I love life no longer than I can enjoy free speech. If I may not now and here speak out every thought of my heart, and the whole truth in Christ, then would I rather die ; and whether I die in my own bed, or upon the iron couch of Varus, matters little. Romans !’ turning now and addressing the crowd, ‘the Emperor in his edict tells me not to preach to you. Not to preach Christ in Rome, neither within a church nor in the streets. Such is this edict. Shall I obey him ? When Christ says, ‘Go forth and preach the gospel to every creature,’ shall I give ear to a Roman Emperor, who bids me hold my peace ? Not so, not so, Romans. I love God too well, and Christ too well, and you too well, to heed such bidding. I love Aurelian too, I have served long under him, and he was ever good to me. He was a good as well as great general, and I loved him. I love him now, but not so well as

these ; not so well as you. And if I obeyed this edict, it would show that I loved him better than you, and better than these, which would be false. If I obeyed this edict I should never speak to you again of this new religion, as you call it. I should leave you all to perish in your sins, without any of that knowledge, or faith, or hope in Christ, which would save you from them, and form you after the image of God, and after death carry you up to dwell with him and with just men forever and ever. I should then, indeed, show that I hated you, which I can never do. I love you and Rome I cannot tell how much — as much as a child ever loved a mother, or children one another. And therefore it is that no power on earth — nor above it, nor under it — no power, save that of God, shall hinder me from declaring to you the doctrine which I think you need, nay, without which your souls will perish and dwell for ever and ever, not with God, but in fires eternal of the lowest hell. For what can your gods do for you ? what are they doing ? They lift you not up to themselves — they push you down rather to those fires. Christ, O Romans, if you will receive him, will save you from them, and from those raging fires of sorrow and remorse, which here on earth do constitute a hell hot as any that burns below. It is your sins which kindle those fires, and with which Christ wages war — not with you. It is your sins with which I wage war here in the streets of Rome, not with you. Only repent of your sins, Romans, and believe in Christ the son of God, and O how glorious and happy were then this great and glorious city. I have told you before, and I tell you now, your vices are undermining the foundations of

this great empire. There is no power to cure these but in Jesus Christ. And when I know this, shall I cease to preach Christ to you because a man, a man like myself, forbids me? Would you not still prepare for a friend or a child the medicine that would save his life, though you were charged by another never so imperiously to forbear? The gospel is the divine medicament that is to heal all your sicknesses, cure all your diseases, remove all your miseries, cleanse all your pollutions, correct all your errors, confirm within you all necessary truth. And when it is this healing draught for which your souls cry aloud, for which they thirst even unto death, shall I the messenger of God, sent in the name of his Son to bear to your lips the cup, of which if you once drink you will live forever, withhold from you that cup, or dash it to the ground? Shall I, a mediator between God and man, falter in my speech, and my tongue hang palsied in my mouth, because Aurelian speaks? What to me, O Romans, is the edict of a Roman Emperor? Down, down, accursed scrawl! nor insult longer both God and man.'

And saying that, he reached forth his hand, and seizing the parchment wrenched it from its brazen frame, and rending it to shreds strewed them abroad upon the air.

It was done in the twinkling of an eye. At first, horror-struck at the audacity of the deed, and while it was doing, the crowd stood still and mute, bereft, as it were, of all power to move or speak. But soon as the fragments of the parchment came floating along upon the air, their senses returned, and the most violent outcries, curses, and savage yells rose from the assembled

multitude, and at the same moment a movement was made to rush upon the Christian, with the evident purpose to sacrifice him on the spot to the offended majesty of the empire. I supposed that their purpose would be easily and instantly accomplished, and that whatever I might attempt to do in his defence would be no more than a straw thrown in the face of a whirlwind. But here a new wonder revealed itself. For no sooner was it evident, from the rage and tumultuous tossings of the crowd, and their ferocious cries, that the last moments of Macer had arrived, than it was apparent that all in the immediate neighborhood of the building, on whose steps he stood, were either Christians, or Romans, who, like myself, were well disposed towards that people, and would promptly join them in their defence of Macer. These, and they amounted to a large and dense mass, at once, as those cries arose, sent forth others as shouts of defiance, and facing outwards made it known that none could assail Macer but by first assailing them.

I could not doubt that it was a preconcerted act by which the Christian was thus surrounded by his friends—not, as I afterward found, with his knowledge, but done at their own suggestion—so that if difficulty should arise, they, by a show of sufficient power, might rescue him, whom all esteemed in spite of his errors, and also serve by their presence to deter him from any further act, or the use of any language, that should give needless offence to either the Prefect or his friends. Their benevolent design was in part frustrated by the sudden, and, as it seemed, unpremeditated movement of Macer in tearing down the edict. But they still served

as a protection against the immediate assaults of the excited and enraged mob.

But their services were soon ended, by the interference of a power with which it was in vain to contend. For when the populace had given over for a moment their design, awed by the formidable array of numbers about the person of Macer, he again, having never moved from the spot where he had stood, stretched out his long arm as if he would continue what he had scarcely as yet begun, and to my surprise the people, notwithstanding what had occurred, seemed not indisposed to hear him. But just at that moment — just as a deep silence had at length succeeded the late uproar — the distant sound, in the direction of the Prefect's, of a troop of horse in rapid movement over the pavements, caught the ears of the people. No one doubted for a moment what it signified.

'Your hour is come, Macer,' cried a voice from the crowd.


'It can never come too soon,' answered the preacher, 'in the service of God. But remember, Roman citizens, what I have told you, that it is for you and for Rome, that I incur the wrath of the wicked Varus, and may so soon at his hands meet the death of a Christian witness.'

As Macer spoke, the Roman guard swept rapidly round a corner, and the multitude giving way in every direction left him alone upon the spot where he had been standing. Regardless of life and limb, the horse dashed through the flying crowds, throwing down many and trampling them under foot, till they reached the Christian, who, undismayed and fearless, maintained his post. There was little ceremony in their treatment of him. He was seized by a band of the soldiers, his hands strongly

bound behind him, and placed upon a horse — when, wheeling round again, the troop at full speed vanished down the same avenue by which they had come, bearing their victim, as we doubted not, to the tribunal of Varus.

Determined to see all I could, and the last if it must be so, of this undaunted spirit, I hastened at my utmost speed in the wake of the flying troop. Little as I had heard or seen of this strange man, I had become as deeply concerned in his fate as any could have been who had known him more intimately, or believed both in him and with him. I know not what it was, unless it were the signatures of sincerity, of child-like sincerity and truth stamped upon him, that so drew me toward him, together with that expression of profound sadness, or rather of inward grief, which, wherever we see it and in whomsoever, excites our curiosity and engages our sympathy. He was to me a man who deserved a better fate than I feared he would meet. He seemed like one who, under fortunate circumstances, might have been of the number of those great spirits whose iron will and gigantic force of character bear down before them all opposition, and yoke nations to their car. Of fear he evidently had no comprehension whatever. The rustling of the autumn breeze in his gown alarmed him as much, as did the clang of those horses' hoofs upon the pavements, though he so well knew it was the precursor of suffering and death.

With all the speed I could use I hurried to the hall of the Prefect. The crowds were pouring in as I reached it, among whom I also rushed along and up the flights of steps, anxious only to obtain an entrance and a post of observation, whence I could see and hear what should



take place. I soon entered the room of justice. Varus was not yet in his seat : but before it at some little distance stood Macer, his hands still bound, and soldiers of the palace on either side.

I waited not long before Varus appeared at the tribunal ; and following him, and placed near him, Fronto, priest of the Temple of the Sun. Now, poor Christian ! I thought within myself, if it go not hard with thee, it will not be for want of those who wish thee ill. The very Satan of thy own faith was never worse than these. Fronto's cruel eyes were fixed upon him just as a hungry tiger's are upon the unconscious victim upon whom he is about to spring. Varus seemed as if he sat in his place to witness some holiday sport, drawing his box of perfume between his fingers, or daintily adjusting the folds of his robe. When a few preliminary formalities were gone through, Varus said, addressing one of the officials of the place,

‘ Whom have we here ? ’

‘ Noble Prefect, Macer the Christian. ’

‘ And why stands he at my tribunal ? ’ continued Varus.

‘ For a breach of the late edict of the Emperor, by which the Christians were forbidden to preach either within their temples or abroad in the streets and squares. ’

‘ Is that all ? ’ asked the Prefect.

‘ Not only, ’ it was replied, ‘ hath he preached abroad in the streets, but he hath cast signal contempt upon both the Emperor and the empire, in that he hath but now torn down from its brazen frame the edict which he had first violated, and scattered it in fragments upon the streets. ’

‘ If these things are so, doubtless he hath well earned his death. How is this, Galilean ? dost thou confess

these crimes, or shall I call in other witnesses of thy guilt ?'

'First,' replied Macer, 'will it please the Prefect to have these bonds removed ? For the sake of old fellowship let them be taken off, that, while my tongue is free to speak, my hands may be free also. Else am I not a whole man.'

'Unbind them,' said the Prefect ; 'let him have his humor. Yet shall we fit on other bracelets anon that may not sit so easy.'

'Be that as it may,' answered the Christian ; 'in the meanwhile I would stand thus. I thank thee for the grace.'

'Now, Christian, once more if thou art ready. Is it the truth that hath been witnessed ?'

'It is the truth,' replied Macer ; 'and I thank God that it is so.'

'But knowest thou, Christian, that in saying that, thou hast condemned thyself to instant death ? Was not death the expressed penalty for violation of that law ?'

'Truly it was,' answered Macer ; 'and what is death to me ?'

'I suppose death to be death,' replied Varus.

'Therein thou shewest thyself to be in the same darkness as all the rest of this idolatrous city. Death to the Christian, Prefect, is life ! Crush me by thy engines, and in the twinkling of an eye is my soul dwelling with God, and looking down with compassion upon thy stony heart.

'Verily, Fronto,' said Varus, 'these Christians are an ingenious people. What a wonderful fancy is this ! But, Christian,' turning to Macer, 'it were a pity surely

for thee to die. Thou hast a family as I learn. Would not thy life be more to them than thy death ?'

'Less,' said the Christian, 'a thousand fold ! Were it not a better vision to them of me crowned with a victor's wreath and sitting with Christ, than dwelling here in this new Sodom, and drinking in its pestilential air ? The sight of me there would be to them a spring of comfort and a source of strength which here I can never be.'

'But,' added the Prefect, 'it is but right that thou shouldst for the present, if it may be, live here and take care of thy family. They will want thee.'

'God,' replied Macer, 'who feeds the birds of the air, and through all their wanderings over the earth from clime to clime still brings them back to the accustomed home, will watch over those whom I love, and bring them home. Such, Prefect, are the mercies of Rome toward us who belong to Christ, that they will not be left long to bewail my loss.'

'Do thy family then hold with thee ?' said Varus.

'Blessed be God, they do.'

'That is a pity —' responded the Prefect.

'Say not so, Varus ; 'tis a joy and a triumph to me in this hour, and to them, that they are Christ's.'

'Still,' rejoined the Prefect, 'I would willingly save thee, and make thee live : and there is one way in which it may be done, and thou mayest return in joy to thy home.'

'Let me then know it,' said Macer.

'Renounce Christ, Macer, and sacrifice ; and thy life is thine, and honor too.'

Macer's form seemed to dilate to more than its com-

mon size, his countenance seemed bursting with expression as he said,

‘ Renounce Christ ? save life by renouncing Christ ? How little, Varus, dost thou know what a Christian is ! Not though I might sit in thy seat or Aurelian’s, or on the throne of a new universe, would I renounce him. To Christ, Varus, do I owe it that I am not now what I was, when I dwelt in the caves of the Flavian. To Christ do I owe it that I am not now what I was when in the ranks of Aurelian. To Christ do I owe it that my soul, once steeped in sin as thy robe in purple dye, is now by him cleansed and, as I trust, thoroughly purged. To Christ do I owe it that once worshipping the dumb idols of Roman superstition, I now bow down to the only living God —’ ‘ Away with him to the tormentors !’ came from an hundred voices — ‘ to Christ do I owe it, O Prefect, that my heart is not now as thine, or his who sits beside thee, or as that of these, hungering and thirsting — never after righteousness — but for the blood of the innocent. Shall I then renounce Christ ? and then worship that ancient adulterer, Jupiter greatest and best ? —’ The hall here rang with the ferocious cries of those who shouted —

‘ Give him over to us !’ — ‘ To the rack with him !’ — ‘ Tear out the tongue of the blaspheming Galilean !’

‘ Romans,’ cried Varus, rising from his chair, ‘ let not your zeal for the gods cause you to violate the sanctity of this room of Justice. Fear not but Varus, who, as you well know, is a lover of the gods, his country, and the city, will well defend their rights and honors against whoever shall assail them.’

He then turned to Macer and said,

‘I should ill perform my duty to thee, Christian, did I spare any effort to bring thee to a better mind—ill should I perform it for Rome did I not use all the means by the State entrusted to me to save her citizens from errors that, once taking root and growing up to their proper height, would soon overshadow, and by their poisonous neighborhood kill, that faith venerable through a thousand years, and of all we now inherit from our ancestors of greatest and best, the fruitful and divine spring.’

‘There, Romans, spoke a Roman,’ exclaimed Fronto.

As Varus ended—at a sign and a word from him, what seemed the solid wall of the room in which we were, suddenly flew up upon its screaming pulleys, and revealed another apartment black as night, save here and there where a dull torch shed just light enough to show its great extent, and set in horrid array before us, engines of every kind for tormenting criminals, each attended by its half-naked minister, ready at a moment’s warning to bind the victim, and put in motion the infernal machinery. At this sight a sudden faintness overspread my limbs, and I would willingly have rushed from the hall—but it was then made impossible. And immediately the voice of the Prefect was again heard :

‘Again, Christian, with Rome’s usual mercy, I freely offer to thee thy life, simply on the condition, easily fulfilled by thee, for it asks but one little word from thy lips, that thou do, for thy own sake and for the sake of Rome, which thou sayest thou lovest, renounce Christ and thy faith.’

‘I have answered thee once, O Prefect ; dost thou think so meanly of me as to suppose that what but now I affirmed, I will now deny, and only for this show of

iron toys and human demons set to play them ? It is not of such stuff Aurelian's men are made, much less the soldiers of the cross. For the love I bear to Rome and Christ, and even thee, Varus, I choose to die.'

'Be assured, Christian, I will not spare thee.'

'I ask it not, Prefect : do thy worst — and the worst is but death, which is life.'

'Pangs that shall keep thee hours dying,' cried the Prefect — 'thy body racked and rent — torn piecemeal one part from another — this is worse than death. Be-think thee well Do not believe that Varus will relent.'

'That were the last thing to find faith with one who knows him as well as Macer does,' replied the Christian.

A flush of passion passed over the face of Varus. But he proceeded in the same even tone,

'Is thy election made, Macer ?'

'It is made.'

'Slaves,' cried the Prefect, 'away with him to the rack, and ply it well.'

'Yes,' repeated Fronto, springing with eager haste from his seat, that he might lose nothing of what was to be seen or heard, 'away with him to the rack, and ply it well.'

Unmoved and unresisting, his face neither pale nor his limbs trembling, did Macer surrender himself into the hands of those horrid ministers of a cruel and bloody faith, who then hastily approached him, and seizing him dragged him toward their worse than hell. Accomplished in their art, for every day is it put to use, Macer was in a moment thrown down and lashed to the iron bars ; when, each demon having completed the pre-

paration, he stood leaning upon his wheel for a last sign from the Prefect. It was instantly given, and while the breath even of every being in the vast hall was suspended, through an intense interest in the scene, the creaking of the engine, as it began to turn, sounded upon the brain like thunder. Not a groan nor a sigh was heard from the sufferer. The engine turned till it seemed as if any body or substance laid upon it must have been wrenched asunder. Then it stopt. And the minutes counted to me like hours or ages ere the word was given, and the wheels unrestrained flew back again to their places. Macer was then unbound. He at first lay where he was thrown upon the pavement. But his life was yet strong within his iron frame. He rose at length upon his feet, and was again led to the presence of his judges. His eye had lost nothing of its wild fire, nor his air any thing of its lofty independence.

Varus again addressed him.

‘Christian, you have felt what there is in Roman justice. Reject not again what Roman mercy again offers thee — life freely, honor too, and office, if thou wilt return once more to the bosom of the fond mother who reared thee.’

‘Yes,’ said Fronto, ‘thy mother who reared thee ! Die not with the double guilt of apostacy and ingratitude upon thy soul.’

‘Varus,’ said Macer, ‘art thou a fool, a very fool, to deem that thy word can weigh more with me than Christ ? Make not thyself a laughingstock to me and such Christians as may be here. The torments of thy importunity are worse to me than those of thy engines.’

‘I wish thee well, Macer ; ’tis that which makes me thus a fool,’

‘ So, Varus, does Satan wish his victim well, to whom he offers his luscious baits. But what is it when the bait is swallowed, and hell is all that has been gained ? What should I gain, but to live with thee, O greater fool ? ’

‘ Think, Macer, of thy wife and children. ’

At those names, Macer bent his head and folded his hands upon his breast, and tears rolled down his cheeks. Till then there had been, as it seemed, a blessed forgetfulness of all but himself and the scene before him. Varus, misinterpreting this his silence, and taking it for the first sign of repentance, hastily cried out,

‘ There is the altar, Macer.—Slave ! hold to him the sacred libation ; he will now pour it out, ’

Instantly a slave held out to him a silver ladle filled with wine.

Macer at the same instant struck it with his sinewy arm and sent it whirling to the ceiling.

‘ Bind him again to the rack, ’ cried the Prefect, leaping from his seat ; ‘ and let him have it till the nerves break. ’

Macer was again seized and stretched upon the iron bed — this time upon another, of different construction, and greater power. Again the infernal machine was worked by the naked slaves, and, as it was wound up, inflicting all that it was capable of doing without absolutely destroying life, groans and screams of fierce agony broke from the suffering Christian. How long our ears were assailed by those terrific cries, I cannot say. They presently died away, as I doubted not, only because Macer himself had expired under the torment. When they had wholly ceased, the engine was reversed and Macer again unbound. He fell lifeless upon the floor. Varus, who had sat the while conversing with Fronto, now said,

‘Revive him, and return him hither.’

Water was then thrown upon him, and powerful drinks were forced down his throat. They produced in a little while their intended effect, and Macer gave signs of returning life. He presently gazed wildly around him, and came gradually to a consciousness of where and what he was. His limbs refused their office, and he was supported and partly lifted to the presence of Varus.

‘Now, Galilean,’ cried Varus, ‘again, how is it with thee?’

‘Better than with thee, I trust in God.’

‘Wilt thou now sacrifice?’

‘I am myself, O Varus, this moment a sacrifice, well pleasing and acceptable to the God whom I worship, and the Master whom I serve.’

‘Why, Varus,’ said Fronto, ‘do we bear longer his insults and impieties? Let me strike him dead.’ And he moved his hand as if to grasp a concealed weapon, with which to do it.

‘Nay, nay, hold, Fronto! let naught be done in haste or passion, nor in violation of the law, but all calmly and in order. We act for those who are not present as well as for ourselves.’

A voice from a dark extremity of the room shouted out, ‘It is Macer, O Prefect, who acts for us.’

The face of Macer brightened up, as if he had suddenly been encompassed by a legion of friends. It was the first token he had received, that so much as one heart in the whole assembly was beating with his. He looked instantly to the quarter whence the voice came, and then, turning to the Prefect, said,

‘Yes, Varus, I am now and here preaching to the

people of Rome, though I speak never a word. 'Tis a sermon that will fall deeper into the heart than ten thousand spoken ones.'

The Prefect commanded that he who had spoken should be brought before him. But upon the most diligent search he could not be found.

'Christian,' said Varus, 'I have other pains in store, to which what thou hast as yet suffered is but as the scratching of the lion's paw. It were better not to suffer them. They will leave no life in thee. Curse Christ — 'tis but a word — and live.'

Macer bent his piercing eye upon the Prefect, but answered not.

'Curse Christ, and live.'

Macer was still silent.

'Bring in then,' cried the Prefect, 'your pincers, rakes and shells; and we will see what they may have virtue to bring forth.'

The black messengers of death hastened at the word from their dark recesses, loaded with those new instruments of torture, and stood around the miserable man.

'Now, Macer,' said Varus once more, 'acknowledge Jupiter Greatest and Best, and thou shalt live.'

Macer turned round to the people, and with his utmost voice cried out,

'There is, O Romans, but One God; and the God of Christ is he —'

No sooner had he uttered those words than Fronto exclaimed,

'Ah! hah! I have found thee then! This is the voice, thrice accursed! that came from the sacred

Temple of the Sun ! This, Romana, is the god whose thunder turned you pale !'

'Had it been my voice alone, priest, that was heard that day, I had been accursed indeed. I was but the humble instrument of him I serve—driven by his spirit. It was the voice of God, not of man.'

'These,' said Fronto, 'are the Christian devices, by which they would lead blindfold into their snares you, Romans, and your children. May Christ ever employ in Rome a messenger cunning and skilful as this prating god, and Hellenism will have naught to fear.'

'And,' cried Macer, 'let your priests be but like Fronto, and the eyes of the blindest driver of you all will be unsealed. Ask Fronto into whose bag went the bull's heart, that on the day of dedication could not be found—

'Thou liest, Nazarene—'

'Ply him with your pincers,' cried Varus,—and the cruel irons were plunged into his flesh. Yet he shrunk not—nor groaned ; but his voice was again heard in the midst of the torture,

'Ask him from whose robe came the old and withered heart, the sight of which so unmanned Aurelian—'

'Dash in his mouth,' shrieked Fronto, 'and stop those lies blacker than hell.'

But Macer went on, while the irons tore him in every part.

'Ask him too for the instructions and the bribes given to the haruspices, and to those who led the beasts up to the altar. Though I die, Romans, I have left the proof of all this in good hands. I stood the while where I saw it all.'

'Thou liest, slave,' cried the furious priest ; and at the same moment springing forward and seizing an

instrument from the hands of one of the tormentors, he struck it into the shoulder of Macer, and the lacerated arm fell from the bleeding trunk. A piercing shriek confessed the inflicted agony.

‘Away with him!’ cried Varus, ‘away with him to the rack, and tear him joint from joint!’

At the word he was borne bleeding away, but not insensible nor speechless. All along as he went his voice was heard calling upon God and Christ, and exhorting the people to abjure their idolatries.

He was soon stretched again upon the rack, which now quickly finished its work; and the Christian Macer, after sufferings which I knew not before that the human frame could so long endure and live, died a martyr to the faith he had espoused; the last words which were heard throughout the hall being these;

‘Jesus, I die for thee, and my death is sweet!’

When it was announced to the Prefect that Macer was dead, he exclaimed,

‘Take the carcass of the Christian dog and throw it upon the square of the Jews: there let the dogs devour it.’

Saying which, he rose from his seat, and, accompanied by Fronto, left by the same way he had before entered the hall of judgment.

Soon as he had withdrawn from the apartment, the base rabble that had filled it, and had gluttled their savage souls upon the horrors of that scene, cried out tumultuously for the body of the Christian, which, when it was gladly delivered to them by those who had already had enough of it, they thrust hooks into, and rushed out dragging it toward the place ordained for it by the

Prefect. As they came forth into the streets the mob increased to an immense multitude of those, who seemed possessed of the same spirit. And they had not together proceeded far, filling the air with their cries and uttering maledictions of every form against the unhappy Christians, before a new horror was proclaimed by that blood-thirsty crew. For one of them, suddenly springing up upon the base of one of the public statues, whence he could be heard by the greater part, cried out,

‘To the house of Macer! To the house of Macer!’

‘Aye, aye,’ shouted another, ‘to the house of Macer, in the ruins behind the shop of Demetrius!’

‘To the house of Macer!’ arose then in one deafening shout from the whole throng; and, filled with this new frenzy, maddened like wild beasts at the prospect of fresh blood, they abandoned there, where they had dragged it, the body of Macer, and put new speed into their feet in their haste to arrive at the place of the expected sport. I knew not then where the ruins were, or it was possible that I might have got in advance of the mob, and given timely warning to the devoted family. Neither did I know any to whom to apply to discharge such a duty. While I deplored this my helplessness and weakness, I suffered myself to be borne along with the rushing crowd. Their merciless threats, their savage language, better becoming barbarians than a people like this, living in the very centre of civilization, filled me with an undefinable terror. It seemed to me that within reach of such a populace, no people were secure of property or life.

‘The Christians,’ said one, ‘have had their day and it

has been a long one, too long for Rome. Let its night now come.'

'Yes,' said another, 'we will all have a hand in bringing it on. Let every Roman do his share, and they may be easily rooted out.'

'I understand,' said another, 'that it is agreed upon, that whatever the people attempt after their own manner, as in what we are now about, they are not to be interfered with. We are to have free pasturage, and feed where, and as we list.'

'Who could suppose,' said the first, 'it should be different? It is well known that formerly, though there has been no edict to the purpose, the people have not only been permitted, they have been expected, to do their part of the business without being asked or urged. I dare say if we can do up this family of — who is it?'

'Macer, the Christian Macer,' interrupted the other; — 'we shall receive the thanks of Aurelian, though they be not spoken, as heartily as Varus. That was a tough old fellow though. They say he has served many years under the Emperor, and when he left the army was in a fair way to rise to the highest rank. Curses upon those who made a Christian of him! It is they, not Varus, who have put him on the rack. But see! are not these the ruins we seek? I hope so, for I have run far enough.'

'Yes,' replied his companion; 'these are the old baths! Now for it!'

The crowd thereupon abandoning the streets, poured itself like an advancing flood among the ruins, filling all the spaces and mounting up upon all the still standing fragments of walls and columns. It was not at all evi-

dent where the house of the Christian was. It all seemed a confusion of ruins and of dead wall.

'Who can show us,' cried out one who took upon himself the office of leader, 'where the dwelling of Macer is?'

'I can,' responded the slender voice of a little boy; 'for I have often been there before they became Christians.'

'Show us then, my young urchin; come up hither. Now, lead the way, and we will follow.'

'You need go no further,' replied the boy; 'that is it?'

'That? It is but a stone wall!'

'Still it is the house,' replied the child; 'but the door is of stone as well as the walls.'

At that the crowd began to beat upon the walls, and shout to those who were within to come forth. They had almost wearied themselves out, and were inclined to believe that the boy had given them false information, when, upon a sort of level roof above the projecting mass which served as the dwelling, a female form suddenly appeared, and, advancing to the edge—not far above, yet beyond, the reach of the mob below—she beckoned to them with her hand, as if she would speak to them.

The crowd, soon as their eyes caught this new object, ceased from their tumultuous cries and prepared to hear what she who approached them thus might have to say. Some, indeed, immediately began to hurl missiles, but they were at once checked by others, who insisted that she should have liberty to speak. And these wretches would have been more savage still than I believed them, if the fair girl who stood there pleading to them had not found some favor. Hers was a bright and sparkling countenance, that at once interested the beholder. Deep

blushes spread over her face and bosom, while she stood waiting the pleasure of the heaving multitude before her.

'Ah! hah!' cried one; 'who is she but the dancing girl Ælia! she is a dainty bit for us. Who would have thought that she was the daughter of a Christian!'

'I am sorry for her,' cried another; 'she is too pretty to be torn in pieces. We must save her.'

'Say on! say on!' now cried one of the leaders of the crowd as silence succeeded; 'we will hear you.'

'Whom do you seek?' then asked Ælia, addressing him who had spoken.

'You know well enough, my pretty girl,' replied the other. 'We seek the house and family of Macer the Christian. Is this it? and are you of his household?'

'This,' she replied, 'is the house of Macer, and I am his daughter. My mother with all her children are below. And now why do you seek us thus?'

'We seek,' replied the savage, 'not only you but your lives. All you have to do is to unbar this door and let us in.'

Though Ælia could have supposed that they were come for nothing else, yet the brutal announcement of the terrible truth drove the color from her cheeks, and caused her limbs to tremble. Yet did it not abate her courage, nor take its energy from her mind.

'Good citizens and friends,' said she, 'for I am sure I must have some friends among you, why should you do us such wrong? We are poor and humble people, and have never had the power, if the will had been ours, to injure you. Leave us in safety, and, if you require it, we will abandon our dwelling and even our native Rome — for we are all native Romans.'

‘That, my young mistress, will not serve our turn. Are you not, as you said, the family of the Christian Macer?’

‘Yes, we are.’

‘Well,’ answered the other, ‘that is the reason we seek you, and mean to have you.’

‘But,’ replied the girl, ‘there must be many among you who would not willingly harm either Macer or anything that is his. Macer is not only a Christian, Romans, but he is a good warm-hearted patriot as ever was born within the compass of these walls. Brutus himself never loved freedom nor hated tyrants more than he.’

‘That’s little to the purpose now-a-days,’ cried one from the crowd.

‘There is not a single possession he has,’ continued Ælia, ‘save only his faith as a Christian, which he would not surrender for the love he bears to Rome and to everything that is Roman. Ever since he was strong enough to draw and wield a sword, has he been fighting for you the battles of our country. If you have seen him, you have seen how cruelly the weapons of the enemy have hacked him. On every limb are there scars of wounds received in battle; and twice, once in Gaul and once in Asia, has he been left for dead upon the field. It was once in Syria, when the battle raged at its highest, and Carinus was suddenly beset by more than he could cope with, and had else fallen into the enemy’s hands a prisoner, or been quickly despatched, that Macer came up and by his single arm saved his general—’

‘A great pity that,’ cried many from the crowd.

‘Macer,’ continued Ælia, ‘only thought that Carinus then represented Rome, and that his life, whatever it was, and however worthless in itself, was needful for

Rome, and he threw himself into the breach even as he would have done for Aurelian or his great captain Probus. Was not his virtue the greater for that? Was he to feed his own humor, and leave Carinus to perish, when his country by that might receive detriment? Macer has never thought of himself. Had he been ambitious as some, he had now been where Mucapor is. But when in the army he always put by his own interests. The army, its generals and Rome were all in all with him, himself, nothing. How, citizens, can you wish to do him harm? or anything that is his? And, even as a Christian — for which you reproach him and now seek him — it is still the same. Believe me when I say, that it is because of his love of you and Rome that he would make you all as he is. He honestly thinks that it is the doctrine of Christ, which can alone save Rome from the destruction which her crimes are drawing down upon her. He has toiled from morning till night, all day and all night — harder than he ever did upon his marches either in Africa or in Asia — that you might be made to know what this religion of Christ is; what it means; what it will bestow upon you if you will receive it; and what it will save you from. And he would not scruple to lose his life, if by so doing he could give any greater efficacy to the truth in which he believes. I would he were here now, Romans, to plead his own cause with you. I know you would so esteem his honesty, and his warm Roman heart, that you would be more ready to serve than to injure him.'

Pity stood in some eyes, but impatience and anger in more.

‘Be not so sure of that,’ cried he who had spoken before. ‘No true Roman can love a Christian. Christians are the worst enemies of the state. As for Macer, say no more of him; he is already done for. All you have to do is to set open the door.’

‘What say you of Macer?’ cried the miserable girl, wringing her hands. ‘Has any evil befallen him?’

‘What he will never recover from,’ retorted the barbarian. ‘Varus has just had him on one of his iron playthings, and his body we have but now left in the street yonder. So hasten.’

‘O worse than demons to kill so good a man,’ cried Ælia, the tears rolling down her cheeks. ‘But if he is dead, come and take us too. We wish not now to live; and ready as he was to die for Christ, so ready are we also. Cease your blows; and I will open the door.’

But her agency in that office was no longer needed. A huge timber had been brought in the meantime from the ruins, and, plied by an hundred hands with noisy uproar, the stone door soon gave way, just as Ælia descended and the murderous crew rushed in.

The work of death was in part quickly done. The sons of Macer, who, on the uproar, had instantly joined their mother in spite of all the entreaties of Demetrius, were at once despatched, and dragged forth by ropes attached to their feet. The two youngest, transfixed by spears, were seen borne aloft as bloody standards of that murderous rout. The mother and the other children, placed in a group in the midst of the multitude, were made to march on, the savages themselves being divided as to what should be their fate. Some cried out, ‘To the Tiber!’—some, ‘Crucify them beyond the walls!’

— others, 'Give 'em the pavements !' But the voice of one more ingenious in cruelty than the rest prevailed.

'To the square by Hanno's with them !'

This proposition filled them with delight.

'To Hanno's ! to Hanno's !' resounded on all sides. And away rushed the infuriated mass to their evil sport.

'And who is Hanno ?' I asked of one near me.

'Hanno ? know you not Hanno ? He is brother of Sosia the gladiator, and breeds dogs for the theatres. You shall soon see what a brood he will turn out. There is no such breeder in Rome as he.'

Sick at heart as I was, I still pressed on, resolved to know all that Christian heroism could teach me. We were soon at the square, capable of holding on its borders not only thousands but tens of thousands, to which number it seemed as if the throng had now accumulated. Hanno's extensive buildings and grounds were upon one side of the square, to which the people now rushed, calling out for the great breeder to come forth with his pack.

He was not slow in obeying the summons. He himself appeared, accompanied, as on the day when Piso saw him on the Capitol Hill, by his two dogs Nero and Sylla. After first stipulating with the ringleaders for a sufficient remuneration, he proceeded to order the game. He was at first for separating the victims, but they implored to be permitted to suffer together, and so much mercy was shown them. They were then set together in the centre of the square, while the multitude disposed themselves in an immense circle around—the windows of the buildings and the roofs of all the neighboring dwellings being also thronged with those who both looked on and applauded. Before the hounds were let loose, Hanno

approached this little band, standing there in the midst and clinging to one another, and asked them,

‘If they had anything to say, or any message to deliver, for he would faithfully perform what they might enjoin.’

The rest weeping, Ælia answered, ‘that she wished to say a few words to the people who stood around.’

‘Speak then,’ replied Hanno, ‘and you shall not be disturbed.’

She then turned toward the people, and said, ‘I can wish you, Romans, before I die, no greater good than that, like me and those who are with me, you may one day become Christians. For you will then be incapable of inflicting such sufferings and wrongs upon any human being. The religion of Jesus will not suffer you to do otherwise than love others as you do yourselves; that is the great Christian rule. Be assured that we now die, as Christians, in full faith in Christ and in joyful hope of living with him, so soon as these mortal bodies shall have perished; and that, though a single word of denial would save us, we would not speak it. Ye have cruelly slaughtered the good Macer; do so now by us, if such is your will, and we shall then be with him where he is.’

With these words she again turned, and throwing her arms around her mother and younger sisters, awaited the onset of the furious dogs, whose yellings and strugglings could all the while be heard. She and they waited but a moment, when the bloodhounds, fiercer than the fiercest beasts of the forest, flew from their leashes, and, in less time than would be believed, naught but a heap of bones marked where the Christian family had stood.

The crowds, then fully sated as it seemed with the rare sport of the morning, dispersed, each having some-

thing to say to another of the firmness and patriotism of Varus and Fronto,—and of the training and behavior of the dogs.

From the earliest period of reflection have I detested the Roman character ; and all that I have witnessed with my own eyes has served but to confirm those early impressions. They are a people wholly destitute of humanity. They are the lineal descendants of robbers, murderers, and warriors — which last are but murderers under another name—and they show their parentage in every line of their hard-featured visages, and still more in all the qualities of the soul. They are stern,—unyielding, unforgiving — cruel. A Roman heart dissected would be found all stone. Any present purpose of passion, or ambition, or party zeal, will extinguish in the Roman all that separates him from the brute. Bear witness to the truth of this, ye massacres of Marius and Sylla ! and others, more than can be named, both before and since — when the blood of neighbors, friends, and fellow-citizens, was poured out as freely as if it had been the filthy stream that leaks its way through the public sewers ! And, in good sooth, was it not as filthy ? For those very ones so slain, had the turn of the wheel — as in very deed has often happened — set them uppermost, would have done the same deed upon the others. Happy is it for the peace of the earth and the great cause of humanity, that this faith of Christ, whether it be true or false, is at length beginning to bear sway, and doing somewhat to soften, what more than

twelve centuries have passed over and left in its original vileness.

When, like the rest of that Roman mob, I had been filled with the sights and sounds of the morning, I turned and sought the palace of Piso.

Arriving there I found Portia, Julia, and Piso sitting together at the hour of dinner. I sat with them. Piso had not left the palace since I had parted from him. They had remained at peace within, and as ignorant of what had happened in the distant parts of the huge capital, as we all were of what was then doing in another planet. When, as the meal drew to a close, I had related to them the occurrences of which I had just been the witness, they could scarce believe what they heard, though it was but what they and all had every reason to look for, from the language which Aurelian had used, and the known hostility of the Prefect. Portia, the mother, was moved more, if it could be so, than even Piso or Julia. When I had ended, she said,

‘Think not, Nicomachus, that although, as thou knowest, I am of Aurelian’s side in religion, I defend these inhuman wrongs. To inflict them can make no part of the duty of any worshipper of the gods, however zealous he may be. I do not believe that the gods are propitiated by any acts which occasion suffering to their creatures. I have seen no justification under any circumstances of human sacrifices — much less can I see any of sacrifices like those you have this morning witnessed. Aurelian, in authorizing or conniving at such horrors, has cut himself loose from the honor and the affections of all those in Rome whose esteem is worth possessing. He has given himself up to the priesthood, and to the vulgar

rabble over whom it exercises a sway more strict than an Eastern despot. He is by these acts turning the current of the best Roman sympathy toward the Christians, and putting off by a long remove the hour when he might hope to see the ancient religion of the state delivered from its formidable rival.'

'It is the purpose of Aurelian,' I said, 'not so much to persecute and annoy the Christians, as to exterminate them. He is persuaded that by using the same extreme and summary measures with the Christians, which he has been accustomed to employ in the army, he can root out this huge evil from the state, as easily as those lesser ones from the camp; — without reflecting that it must be impossible to discover all, or any very large proportion of those who profess Christianity, and that therefore his slaughter of a half or a quarter of the whole number, will be to no purpose. It will have been but killing so many — there will be no other effect; unless, indeed, it have the effect to convince new thousands of the power, and worth, and divinity of that faith, for which men are so willing to die.'

'I mourn,' said Portia, 'that the great head of the state, and the great high priest of our religion should have taken the part he has. Measures of moderation and true wisdom, though they might not have obtained for him so great a name for zeal and love of the gods, nor made so sudden and deep an impressi^on upon the common mind and heart, would have secured with greater probability the end at which he has aimed.'

'It is hard,' said I, 'to resist nature, especially so when superstition comes in to its aid. Aurelian, by nature a savage, is doubly one through the influence of his

religion and the priesthood. Moderation and humanity are so contrary to every principle of the man and his faith, that they are not with more reason to be looked for from him than gentleness in a famished wolf.'

Portia looked as if I had assailed the walls and capitol of Rome.

'I know not, Greek,' she quickly said, 'on what foundation it is you build so heavy a charge against the time-honored faith of Rome. It has served Rome well these thousand years, and reared men whose greatness will dwell in the memory of the world while the world lasts.'

'Great men have been reared in Rome,' I replied; 'it can by none be denied. But it has been by resisting the influences of their religion, not by courting them. They have left themselves in this to the safer tutelage of nature, as have you, lady; and they have escaped the evils, which the common superstition would have entailed upon them, had they admitted it to their bosoms. Who can deny that the religion of Rome, so far as it is a religion for the common people, is based up on the characters of the gods, as they through history and tradition are held up to them — especially as they are painted by the poets? Say if there be any other books of authority on this great theme than the poets? What book of religious instruction and precept have you, or have you ever had, corresponding to the volume of the Christians, called their gospels?'

'We have none,' said Portia, as I paused compelling a rejoinder. 'It is true, we have but our historians and our poets, with what we find in the philosophers.'

'And the philosophers,' I replied, 'it will be seen at

once can never be in the hands of the common people. Whence then do they receive their religious ideas, but from tradition, and the character of the deities of heaven, as they are set forth in the poets ? And if this be so, I need not ask whether it be possible that the religion of Rome should be any other than a source of corruption to the people. So far as the gods should be their models, they can do no otherwise than help to sink their imitators lower and lower in all filth and vice. Happily for Rome and the world, lady, men instinctively revolt at such examples, and copy instead the pattern which their own souls supply. Had the Romans been all which the imitation of their gods would have made them, this empire had long ago sunk under the deep pollution. Fronto and Aurelian—the last at least sincere—aim at a restoration of religion. They would lift it up to the highest place, and make it the sovereign law of Rome. In this attempt, they are unconsciously digging away her very foundations ; they are leveling her proud walls with the earth. Suppose Rome were made what Fronto would have her ? Every Roman were then another Fronto—or another Aurelian. Were that a world to live in ? or to endure ? These, lady, are the enemies of Rome, Aurelian and Fronto. The only hope for Rome lies in the reception of some such principles as these of the Christians. Whether true or false, as a revelation from Heaven, they are in accordance with the best part of our nature, and, once spread abroad and received, they would tend by a mighty influence to exalt it more and more. They would descend, as it is of the nature of absolute truth to do, and lay hold of the humblest and lowest and vilest, and in them erect their authority, and bring them into

the state, in which every man should be, for the reason that he is a man. Helenism cannot do this.'

'Notwithstanding what I have heard, Nicomachus, I think you must yourself be a Christian. But whether you are or not, I grant you to understand well what religion should be. And I must say that it has ever been such to me. I, from what I have read of our moralists and philosophers, and from what I have reflected, have arrived at principles not very different from such as you have now hinted at—'

'And are those of Fronto or Varus like yours, lady?'

'I fear not,' said Portia.

'Yours then, let me say, are the religion; which you have first found within your own breast, a gift from the gods, and then by meditation have confirmed and exalted; theirs, the common faith of Rome. Could your faith rejoice in or permit the horrors I have this day witnessed and but now described? Yet of theirs they are the legitimate fruit, the necessary product.'

'Out of the best,' replied Portia, 'I believe, Nicomachus, may often come the worst. There is naught so perfect and so wise, but human passions will mar and pervert it. I should not wonder if, in ages to come, this peace-loving faith of the Christians, should it survive so long, should itself come to preside over scenes as full of misery and guilt as those you have to-day seen in the streets of Rome.'

'It may be,' I rejoined. 'But it is nevertheless our duty, in the selection of our principles, to take those which are the purest, the most humane, the most accordant with what is best in us, and the least liable to perversion and abuse. And whether, if this be just, it

be better that mankind should have presented for their imitation and honor the character and actions of Jesus Christ, or those of Jupiter "Greatest and Best," may be left for the simplest to determine.'

Portia is so staunch a Roman, that one cannot doubt that as she was born and has lived, so she will die — a Roman. And truth to say, were all like her, there were little room for quarrel with the principles that could produce such results. But for one such, there are a thousand like Varus, Fronto, and Aurelian.

As after this interview, which was prolonged till the shades of evening began to fall, I held communion with myself on the way to the quiet retreats of Tibur, I could not but entertain apprehensions for the safety of the friends I had just left. I felt that where such men as Varus and Fronto were at the head of affairs, wielding, almost as they pleased, the omnipotence of Aurelian, no family nor individual of whatever name or rank could feel secure of either fortune or life. I had heard indeed such expressions of regard fall from the Emperor for Piso and his beautiful wife, that I was sure that if any in Rome might feel safe, it was they. Yet why should he, who had fallen with fatal violence upon one of his own household, and such a one as Aurelia, hesitate to strike the family of Piso, if thereby religion or the state were to be greatly benefited? I could see a better chance for them only in the Emperor's early love of Julia, which still seemed to exercise over him a singular power.

The Queen, I found, upon naming to her the subject of my thoughts, could entertain none of my apprehensions. It is so difficult for her nature to admit the

faintest purpose of the infliction of wanton suffering, that she cannot believe it of others. Notwithstanding her experience of the harsh and cruel spirit of Aurelian, notwithstanding the unnecessary destruction, for any national or political object, of the multitudes of Palmyra, still she inclines to confide in him. He has given so many proofs of regret for that wide ruin, he has suffered so much for it—especially for his murder of Longinus—in the opinion of all Rome, and of the highest and best in all nations, that she is persuaded he will be more cautious than ever whom he assails, and where he scatters ruin and death. Still, such is her devotion to Julia and her love of Piso—so entirely is her very life lodged in that of her daughter, that she resolved to seek the Emperor without delay, and if possible obtain an assurance of their safety, both from his own arm and that of popular violence. This I urged upon her with all the freedom I might use; and not in vain; for the next day, at the gardens of Sallust, she had repeated interviews with Aurelian—and afterward at her own palace, whither Aurelian came with Livia, and where, while Livia ranged among the flowers with Faustula, the Emperor and the Queen held earnest discourse—not only on the subject which chiefly agitated Zenobia, but on the general principles on which he was proceeding in this attempted annihilation of Christianity. Sure I am, that never in the Christian body itself was there one who pleaded their cause with a more winning and persuasive eloquence.

LETTER X.

FROM PISO TO FAUSTA.

I WRITE to you, Fausta, by the hands of Vabalathus, who visits Palmyra on his way to his new kingdom. I trust you will see him. The adversities of his family and the misfortunes of his country have had most useful effects upon his character. Though the time has been so short, he has done much to redeem himself. Always was he, indeed, vastly superior to his brothers; but now, he is not only that, but very much more. Qualities have unfolded themselves, and affections and tastes warmed into life, which we none of us, I believe, so much as suspected the existence of. Zenobia has come to be devotedly attached to him, and to repose the same sort of confidence in him as formerly in Julia. All this makes her the more reluctant to part with him; but, as it is for a throne, she acquiesces. He carries away from Rome with him one of its most beautiful and estimable women — the youngest daughter of the venerable Tacitus — to whom he has just been married. In her you will see an almost too favorable specimen of Roman women.

Several days have elapsed since I wrote to you, giving an account of the sufferings and death of the Christian Macer — as I learned them from those who were present — for a breach of the late edicts, and for sacrile-

giously, as the laws term it, tearing down the parchment containing them from one of the columns of the capitol. During this period other horrors of the same kind have been enacted in different parts of the city. Macer is not the only one who has already paid for his faith with his life. All the restraints of the law seem to be withdrawn, not confessedly but virtually, and the Christians in humble condition — and such for the most part we are — are no longer safe from violence in the streets of Rome. Although, Fausta, you believe not with us, you must, scarcely the less for that, pity us in our present straits. Can the mind picture to itself, in some aspects of the case, a more miserable lot! Were the times, even at the worst, so full of horror in Palmyra as now here in Rome? There, if the city were given up to pillage, the citizen had at least the satisfaction of dying in the excitement of a contest, and in the defence of himself and his children. Here the prospect is — the actual scene is almost arrived and present — that all the Christians of Rome will be given over to the butchery, first, of the Prefect's court, and others of the same character, established throughout the city for the express purpose of trying the Christians — and next, of the mob commissioned with full powers to search out, find, and slay, all who bear the hated name. The Christians, it is true, die for a great cause. In that cause they would rather die than live, if to live, they must sacrifice any of the interests of truth. But still death is not preferred; much less is death, in the revolting and agonizing form, which, chiefly, these voluntary executioners choose, to be viewed in any other light than an evil too great almost to be endured.

It would astonish you, I think, and give you conceptions of the power of this religion such as you have never had as yet, could you with me look into the bosoms of these thousand Christian families, and behold the calmness and the fortitude with which they await the approaching calamities. There is now, as they believe, little else before them but death — and death, such as a foretaste has been given of, in the sufferings of Macer. Yet are they, with wonderfully few exceptions, here in their houses prepared for whatever may betide, and resolved that they will die for him unto whom they have lived. This unshrinking courage, this spirit of self-sacrifice; is the more wonderful, as it is now the received belief that they would not forfeit their Christian name or hope by withdrawing, before the storm bursts, from the scene of danger.

There have been those in the church, and some there are now, who would have all, who in time of persecution seek safety in flight, or by any form of compromise, visited with the severest censures the church can inflict, and forever after refused readmission to the privileges which they once enjoyed. Paying no regard to the peculiar temperament and character of the individual, they would compel all to remain fixed at their post, inviting by a needless ostentation of their name and faith, the search and assault of the enemy. Macer was of this number. Happily they are now few : and the Christians are left free — free from the constraint of any tyrant opinion, to act according to the real feeling of the heart. But does this freedom carry them away from Rome ? Does it show them to the world hurrying in crowds by day, or secretly flying by night, from the

threatened woes? No so. All who were here when these troubles first began, are here now, or with few and inconsiderable exceptions—fewer than I could wish. All who have resorted to me under these circumstances for counsel or aid have I advised, if flight be a possible thing to them, that they should retreat with their children to some remote and secluded spot, and wait till the tempest should have passed by. Especially have I so advised and urged all whom I have known to be of a sensitive and timid nature, or bound by ties of more than common interest and necessity to large circles of relatives and dependents. I have aimed to make them believe, that little gain would accrue to the cause of Christ from the addition of them and their's to the mass of sufferers—when that mass is already so large; whereas great and irreparable loss would follow to the community of their friends, and of the Christians who should survive. They would do an equal service to Christ and his church by living, and, on the first appearance of calmer times, reassuming their Christian name and profession; being then a centre about which there might gather together a new multitude of believers. If still the enemies of Christ should prevail, and a day of rest never dawn nor arise, they might then, when hope was dead, come forth and add themselves to the innumerable company of those, born of Heaven, who hold life and all its joys and comforts as dross, in comparison with the perfect integrity of the mind. By such statements have I prevailed with many. Probus too has exerted his power in the same direction, and has enjoyed the happiness of seeing safely embarked for Greece,

or Syria, many whose lives in the coming years will be beyond price to the then just-surviving church.

Yet do not imagine, Fausta, that we are an immaculate people; that the weaknesses and faults which seem universal to mankind, are not to be discovered in us; that we are all, what by our acknowledged principles we ought to be. We have our traitors and our renegades, our backsliders, and our well-dissembling hypocrites — but so few are they, that they give us little disquiet, and bring slight discredit upon us with the enemy. And beside these, there will now be those, as in former persecutions, who, as the day of evil approaches, will, through the operation simply of their fears, renounce their name and faith. Of the former, some have already made themselves conspicuous — conspicuous now by their cowardly and hasty apostacy, as they were before by a narrow, contentious, and restless zeal. Among others, the very one, who, on the evening when the Christians assembled near the baths of Macer, was so forward to assail the faith of Probus, and who ever before, on other occasions, when a display could by any possibility be made of devotion to his party, or an ostentatious parade of his love of Christ, was always thrusting himself upon the notice of our body and clamoring for notoriety, has already abandoned us and sought safety in apostacy. Others of the same stamp have in like manner deserted us. They are neither lamented by us nor honored by the other party. It is said of him whom I have just spoken of, that soon as he had publicly renounced Christ, and sacrificed, hisses and yells of contempt broke from the surrounding crowds. He, doubtless it occurred to them, who had so

proved himself weak, cowardly, and faithless, to one set of friends, could scarcely be trusted as brave and sincere by those to whom he then joined himself. There are no virtues esteemed by the Romans like courage and sincerity. This trait in their character is a noble one, and is greatly in our favor. For, much as they detest our superstitions, they so honor our fortitude under suffering, that a deep sympathy springs up almost unconsciously in our behalf. Half of those who, on the first outbreak of these disorders, would have been found bitterly hostile, if their hearts could be scanned now or when this storm shall have passed by, would be found most warmly with us—not in belief indeed, but in a fellow-feeling, which is its best preparation and almost certain antecedent. Even in such an inhuman rabble as perpetrated the savage murder of the family of Macer, there were thousands who, then driven on by the fury of passion, will, as soon as reflection returns, bear testimony in a wholly altered feeling toward us, to the power with which the miraculous serenity and calm courage of those true martyrs have wrought within them. No others are now spoken of in Rome, but Macer and his heroic wife and children.

Throughout the city it is this morning current that new edicts are to be issued in the course of the day. Milo, returning from some of his necessary excursions into the more busy and crowded parts of the city, says that it is confidently believed. I told him that I could scarcely think it, as I had reason to believe that the Emperor had engaged that they should not be as yet.

'An Emperor surely,' said Milo, 'may change his mind if he lists. He is little better than the rest of us, if he have not so much power as that. I think, if I were Emperor, that would be my chief pleasure, to do and say one thing to day and just the contrary thing to-morrow, without being obliged to give a reason for it. If there be anything that makes slavery it is this rendering a reason. In the service of the most noble Gallienus, fifty slaves were subject to me, and never was I known to render a reason for a single office I put them to. That was being nearer an Emperor than I fear I shall ever be again.'

'I hope so, Milo,' I said. 'But what reason have you to think, — if you will render a reason, — that Aurelian has changed his mind?'

'I have given proof,' answered Milo, 'have I not, that if anything is known in Rome, it is known by Curio?'

'I think you have shown that he knows some things.'

'He was clearly right about the sacrifices,' responded Milo, 'as events afterwards declared. Just as many suffered as he related to me. What now he told me this morning was this, "that certain persons would find themselves mistaken — that some knew more than others — that the ox led to the slaughter knew less than the butcher — that great persons trusted not their secrets to every one — Emperors had their confidants — and Fronto had his."'

'Was that all?' I patiently asked.

'I thought, noble sir,' he replied, 'that it was — for upon that he only sagaciously shook his head and was silent. However, as I said nothing, knowing well that some folks would die if they retained a secret, though they never would part with it for the asking, Curio began

again, soon as he despaired of any question from me, and said "he could tell me what was known but to three persons in Rome." His wish was that I should ask him who they were, and what it was that was known but to so few; but I did not, but began a new bargain with a man for his poultry—for, you must know, we were in the market. He then began himself and said, "Who think you they were?" But I answered not. "Who," he then whispered in my ear, "but Aurelian, Fronto, and myself!" Then I gratified him by asking what the secret was, for if it had anything to do with the Christians I should like to know it. "I will tell it to thee," he said, "but to no other in Rome, and to thee only on the promise that it goes in at thy ear but not out at thy mouth." I said that I trusted that I, who had kept, I dared hardly say how many years, and kept them still, the secrets of Gallienus, should know how to keep and how to reveal anything he had to say. Whereupon, without any more reserve, he assured me that Fronto had persuaded the Emperor to publish new and more severe edicts before the sixth hour, telling him as a reason for it, that the Christians were flying from Rome in vast numbers; that every night—they having first passed the gates in the day—multitudes were hastening into the country, making for Gaul and Spain, or else embarking in vessels long prepared for such service on the Tiber; that, unless instantly arrested, there would be none or few for the edicts to operate upon, and then, when all had become calm again, and he—Aurelian—were dead, and another less pious upon the throne, they would all return, and Rome swarm with them as before. Curio said that, when the Emperor heard this, he

broke out into a wild and furious passion. He swore by the great god of light—which is an oath Curio says he never uses but he keeps—that you, sir, Piso, had deceived him—had cajoled him; that you had persuaded him to wait and hear what the Christians had to say for themselves before they were summarily dealt with, which he had consented to do, but which he now saw was a device to gain time by which all, or the greater part, might escape secretly from the capital. He then, with Fronto and the secretaries, prepared and drew up new edicts, declaring every Christian an enemy of the state and of the gods, and requiring them everywhere to be informed against, and upon conviction of being Christians, to be thrown into prison and await there the judgment of the Emperor. These things, sir, are what I learned from Curio, which I make no secret of, for many reasons. I trust you will believe them, for I heard the same story all along the streets, and mine is better worthy of belief only because of where and whom it comes from.'

I told Milo that I could not but suppose there was something in it, as I had heard the rumor from several other sources; that, if Curio spoke the truth, it was worse than I had apprehended.

Putting together what was thus communicated by Milo, and what, as he said, was to be heard anywhere in the streets, I feared that some dark game might indeed be playing by the priest against us, by which our lives might be sacrificed even before the day were out.

'Should you not,' said Julia, 'instantly seek Aurelian? If what Milo has said possess any particle of truth, it is most evident the Emperor has been imposed upon by the lies of Fronto. He has cunningly used his opportu-

nities : and you, Lucius, except he be instantly undeceived, may be the first to feel his power.'

While she was speaking, Probus, Felix, and others of the principal Christians of Rome entered the apartment. Their faces and their manner, and their first words, declared that the same conviction possessed them as us.

'We are constrained,' said Felix, 'thus with little ceremony, noble Piso, to intrude upon your privacy. But in truth the affair we have come upon admits not of ceremony or delay.'

'Let there be none then, I pray, and let us hear at once what concerns us all.'

'It is spread over the city,' replied the bishop, 'that before the sixth hour edicts are to be issued that will go to the extreme we have feared—affecting the liberty and life of every Christian in Rome. We find it hard to believe this, however, as it is in the face of what Aurelian has most expressly stipulated. It is therefore the wish and prayer of the Christians that you, being nearer to him than any, should seek an interview with him, and then serve our cause in such manner and by such arguments as you best can.'

'This is what we desire, Piso,' said they all.

I replied, that I would immediately perform that which they desired, but that I would that some other of our number should accompany me. Whereupon Felix was urged to join me ; and consenting, we, at the moment, departed for the palace of Aurelian.

On arriving at the gardens, it was only by urgency that I obtained admission to the presence of the Emperor. But upon declaring that I came upon an errand

that nearly concerned himself and Rome, I was ordered to be brought into his private apartment.

As I entered, Aurelian quickly rose from the table, at which he had been sitting, on the other side of which sat Fronto. None of the customary urbanity was visible in his deportment; his countenance was dark and severe, his reception of me cold and stately, his voice more harsh and bitter than ever. I could willingly have excused the presence of the priest.

‘Ambassadors,’ said Aurelian inclining toward us, ‘I may suppose from the community of Christians.’

‘We came at their request,’ I replied; ‘rumors are abroad through the city, too confidently reported, and too generally credited to be regarded as wholly groundless, yet which it is impossible for those who know Aurelian to believe, asserting that to-day edicts are to be issued affecting both the liberty and the lives of the Christians —’

‘I would, Piso, that rumor were never farther from the truth than in this.’

‘But,’ I rejoined, ‘has not Aurelian said that he would proceed against them no further till he had first heard their defence from their own organs?’

‘Is it one party only in human affairs, young Piso,’ he sharply replied, ‘that must conform to truth and keep inviolate a plighted word? Is deception no vice when it is a Christian who deceives? I indeed said that I would hear the Christians, though, when I made that promise, I also said that ’twould profit them nothing; but I then little knew why it was that Piso was so urgent.’

‘Truth,’ I replied, ‘cannot be received from some quarters, any more than sweet and wholesome water

through poisoned channels. Even, Aurelian, if Fronto designed not to mislead, no statement passing through his lips — if it concerned the Christians — could do so, without there being added to it, or lost from it, much that properly belonged to it. I have heard that too, which, I may suppose, has been poured into the mind of Aurelian, to fill it with a bitterer enmity still toward the Christians — that the Christians have sought this delay only that they might use the opportunities thus afforded, to escape from his power — and that, using them, they have already in the greater part fled from the capital, leaving to the Emperor but a few old women and children upon whom to wreak his vengeance. How does passion bring its film over the clearest mind ! How does the eye that will not see, shut out the light though it be brighter than that of day ! It had been wiser in Aurelian, as well as more merciful, first to have tried the truth of what has thus been thrust upon his credulity, ere he made it a ground of action. True himself, he suspects not others ; but suspicion were sometimes a higher virtue than frank confidence. Had Aurelian but looked into the streets of Rome, he could not but have seen the grossness of the lie that has been palmed upon his too willing ear. Of the seventy thousand Christians who dwelt in Rome, the same seventy thousand, less by scarce a seventieth part, are now here within their dwellings waiting the will of Aurelian. Take this on the word of one whom, in former days at least, you have found worthy of your trust. Take it on the word of the venerable head of this community who stands here to confirm it either by word or oath — and in Rome it

needs but to know that Felix, the Christian, has spoken, to know that truth has spoken too.'

'The noble Piso,' added Felix 'has spoken what all who know ought of the affairs and condition of the Christians know to be true. There is among us, great Emperor, too much, rather than too little, of that courage that meets suffering and death without shrinking. Let your proclamations this moment be sounded abroad calling upon the Christians to appear for judgment upon their faith before the tribunals of Rome, and they will come flocking up as do your Pagan multitudes to the games of the Flavian.'

While we had been speaking, Fronto sat, inattentive as it seemed to what was going on. But at these last words he was compelled to give ear, and did it as a man does who has heard unwelcome truths. As Felix ended, the Emperor turned toward him without speaking, and without any look of doubt or passion, waiting for such explanation as he might have to give.

Fronto, instantly re-assuring himself, rose from his seat with the air of a man who doubts not the soundness of his cause, and feels sure of the ear of his judge.

'I will not say, great Emperor, that I have not in my ardor made broader the statements which I have received from others. It is an error quite possible to have been guilty of. My zeal for the gods is warm and oftentimes outruns the calm dictates of reason. But if what has now been affirmed as true, be true, it is more I believe than they who so report can make good—or than others can, be they friends or enemies of this tribe. Who shall now go out into this wilderness of streets, into the midst

of this countless multitude of citizens and strangers — men of all religions and all manners — and pick me out the seventy thousand Christians, and show that all are close at home ? Out of the seventy thousand, is it not palpable that its third or half may have fled, and yet it shall be in no man's power to make it so appear—to point to the spot whence they have departed, or to that whither they have gone ? But beside this, I must here and now confess, that it was upon no knowledge of my own gathered by my own eyes and ears that I based the truth, now charged as error ; but upon what came to me through those in whose word I have ever placed the most sacred trust, the priests of the temple, and, more than all, my faithful servant — friend I may call him — Curio, into whom drops by some miracle all that is strange or new in Rome.'

I said in reply, 'that it were not so difficult perhaps as the priest has made it seem, to learn what part of the Christians were now in Rome, and what part were gone. There are among us, Aurelian, in every separate church, men who discharge duties corresponding to those which Fronto performs in the Temple of the Sun. We have our priests, and others subordinate to them, who fill offices of dignity and trust. Beside these, there are others still, who, for their wealth or their worth, are known well, not among the Christians only, but the Romans also. Of these, it were an easy matter to learn, whether or not they are now in Rome. And if these are here, who, from the posts they fill would be the first victims, it may be fairly supposed that the humbler sort and less able to depart—and therefore safer—are also here. Here I stand, and here stands Felix ; we are not among the

missing ! And we boast not of a courage greater than may be claimed for the greater part of those to whom we belong.'

'Great Emperor,' said Fronto, 'I will say no more than this, that in its whole aspect this bears the same front, as the black aspersions of the wretch Macer, whose lies, grosser than Cretan ever forged, poured in a foul and rotten current from his swollen lips ; yea, while the hot irons were tearing out his very heart-strings, did he still belch forth fresh torrents blacker and fouler as they flowed longer, till death came and took him to other tortures worse a thousand-fold — the just doom of such as put false for true. That those were the malignant lies I have said they are, Aurelian can need no other proof, I hope, than that which has been already given.'

'I am still, Fronto, as when your witnesses were here before me, satisfied with your defence. When indeed I doubt the truth of Aurelian, I may be found to question that of Fronto. Piso—hold ! We have heard and said too much already. Take me not, as if I doubted, more than Fronto, the word which you have uttered, or that of the venerable Felix. You have said that which you truly believe. The honor of a Piso has never been impeached, nor, as I trust, can be. Yet, has there been error, both here and there, and, I doubt not, is. Let it be thus determined then. If, upon any, blame shall seem to rest, let it be upon myself. If any shall be charged with doing to-day what must be undone to-morrow, let the burden be upon my shoulders. I will therefore recede ; the edicts, which, as you have truly heard, were to-day to have been promulged, shall sleep at least another day. To-morrow, Piso, at the sixth hour, in the palace

on the Palatine, shall Probus — if such be the pleasure of the Christians — plead in their behalf. Then and there will I hear what this faith is, from him, or from whomsoever they shall appoint. And now no more.'

With these words on the part of Aurelian, our audience closed, and we turned away—grieving to see that a man like him, otherwise a Titan every way, should have so surrendered himself into the keeping of another; yet rejoicing that some of that spirit of justice that once wholly swayed him still remained, and that our appeal to it had not been in vain.

To-morrow then, at the sixth hour, will Probus appear before Aurelian. It is not, Fausta, because I, or any, suppose that Aurelian himself can be so wrought upon as to change any of his purposes, that we desire this hearing. He is too far entered into this business — too heartily, and, I may add, too conscientiously — to be drawn away from it, or diverted from the great object which he has set up before him. I will not despair, however, that even he may be softened, and abate somewhat of that raging thirst for our blood, for the blood of us all, that now seems to madden him. But, however this may be, upon other minds impressions may be made that may be of service to us either directly or indirectly. We may suppose that the hearing of the Christians will be public, that many of great weight with Aurelian will be there, who never before heard a word from a Christian's lips, and who know only that we are held as enemies of the state and its religion. Especially, I doubt not, will many, most or all, of the Senate be there; and it is to that body I still look, as,

in the last resort, able perhaps to exert a power that may save us at least from absolute annihilation.

To-day has Probus been heard ; and while others sleep, I resume my pen to describe to you the events of it, as they have occurred.

It was in the banqueting hall of the imperial palace on the Palatine, that Probus was directed to appear, and defend his cause before the Emperor. It is a room of great size, and beautiful in its proportions and decorations. A row of marble pillars adorns each longer side of the apartment. Its lofty ceiling presents to the eye in allegory, and in colors that can never fade, Rome victorious over the world. The great and good of Rome's earlier days stand around, in marble or brass, upon pedestals, or in niches, sunk into the substance of the walls. And where the walls are not thus broken, pictures wrought upon them, set before the beholder many of the scenes in which the patriots of former days achieved or suffered for the cause of their country. Into this apartment, soon as it was thrown open, poured a crowd both of Christians and Pagans, of Romans and of strangers from every quarter of the world. There was scarcely a remote province of the empire that had not there its representative ; and from the far East, discernible at once by their costume, were many present, who seemed interested not less than others in the great questions to be agitated. Between the two central columns upon the western side, just beneath the pedestal of a colossal statue of Vespasian, the great military idol of Aurelian, upon a seat slightly raised above the floor,

having on his right hand Livia and Julia, sat the Emperor. He was surrounded by his favorite generals and the chief members of the senate, seated, or else standing against the columns or statues which were near him. There too, at the side of, or immediately before, Aurelian, but placed lower, were Porphyrius, Varus, Fronto, and half the priesthood of Rome. A little way in front of the Emperor, and nearly in the centre of the room, stood Probus.

If Aurelian sat in his chair of gold, looking the omnipotent master of all the world, as if no mere mortal force could drive him from the place he held and filled — Probus, on his part, though he wanted all that air of pride and self-confidence written upon every line of Aurelian's face and form, yet seemed like one, who, in the very calmness of an unfaltering trust in a goodness and power above that of earth, was in perfect possession of himself, and fearless of all that man might say or do. His face was pale ; but his eye was clear. His air was that of a man mild and gentle, who would not injure willingly the meanest thing endowed with life ; but of a man too of that energy and inward strength of purpose, that he would not on the other hand suffer an injury to be done to another, if any power lodged within him could prevent it. It was that of a man to be loved, and yet to be feared ; whose compassion you might rely upon ; but whose indignation at wrong and injustice might also be relied upon, whenever the weak or the oppressed should cry out for help against the strong and the cruel.

No sooner had Aurelian seated himself, and the thronged apartment become still, than he turned to those who were present and said,

‘That the Christians had desired this audience before him and the sacred senate, and he had therefore granted them their request. And he was now here, to listen to whatever they might urge in their behalf. But,’ said he, ‘I tell them now, as I have told them before, that it can be of no avail. The acts of former Emperors, from Nero to the present hour, have sufficiently declared what the light is in which a true Roman should view the superstition that would supplant the ancient worship of the gods. It is enough for me, that such is the acknowledged aim, and asserted tendency and operation of this Jewish doctrine. No merits of any kind can atone for the least injury it might inflict upon that venerable order of religious worship which, from the time of Romulus, has exercised over us its benignant influence, and, doubtless, by the blessings it has drawn down upon us from the gods, crowned our arms with a glory the world has never known before—putting under our feet every civilized kingdom from the remotest East to the farthest West, and striking terror into the rude barbarians of the German forests. Nevertheless, they shall be heard; and if it is from thee, Christian, that we are to know what thy faith is, let us now hear whatever it is in thy heart to say. There shall no bridle be put upon thee; but thou hast freest leave to utter what thou wilt. There is nothing of worst concerning either Rome or her worship, her rulers or her altars, her priesthood or her gods, but thou mayest pour it forth in such measure as shall please thee, and no one shall say thee nay. Now say on; the day and the night are before thee.’

‘I shall require, great Emperor,’ replied Probus, ‘but little of either; yet I thank thee, and all of our name

who are here present thank thee, for the free range which thou hast offered. I thank thee too, and so do we all, for the liberty of frank and undisturbed speech, which thou hast assured to me. Yet shall I not use it to malign either the Romans or their faith. It is not with anger and fierce denunciation, O Emperor, that it becomes the advocate, of what he believes to be a religion from Heaven, to assail the adherents of a religion like this of Rome, descended to the present generation through so many ages, and which all who have believed it in times past, and all who believe it now, do hold to be true and woven into the very life of the state — the origin of its present greatness, and without which it must fall asunder into final ruin, the bond that held it together being gone. If the religion of Rome be false, or really injurious, it is not the generations now living who are answerable for its existence formerly or now, nor for the principles, truths, or rites, which constitute it. They have received it, as they have received a thousand customs which are now among them, by inheritance from the ancestors who bequeathed them, which they received at too early an age to judge concerning their fitness or unfitness, but to which, for the reason of that early reception, they have become fondly attached, even as to parents, brothers, and sisters, from whom they have never been divided. It becomes not the Christian, therefore, to load with reproaches those who are placed where they are, not by their own will, but by the providence of the Great Ruler. Neither does it become you of the Roman faith to reproach us for the faith to which we adhere ; because the greater proportion of us also have inherited our religion, as you yours, from parents and

a community who professed it before us, and all regard it as heaven-descended, and so proved to be divine, that without inexpressible guilt we may not refuse to accept it. It must be in the face of reason, then, and justice, in the face of what is both wise and merciful, if either should judge harshly of the other.

‘ Besides, what do I behold in this wide devotion of the Roman people to the religion of their ancestors, but a testimony, beautiful for the witness it bears, to the universality of that principle or feeling, which binds the human heart to some god or gods, in love and worship? The worship may be wrong, or greatly imperfect, and sometimes injurious; the god or gods may be so conceived of, as to act with hurtful influences upon human character and life; still it is religion; it is a sentiment that raises the thoughts of the humble and toilworn from the earthly and the perishing, to the heavenly and the eternal. And this, though accompanied by some or many rites shocking to humanity, and revolting to reason, is better than that men were, in this regard, no higher nor other than brutes; but received their being as they do theirs, they know not whence, and when they lose it, depart like them, they know not and care not whither. In the religious character of the Roman people—for religious in the earlier ages of this empire they eminently were, and they are religious now, though in less degree—I behold and acknowledge the providence of God, who has so framed us that our minds tend by resistless force to himself; satisfied at first with low and crude conceptions, but ever aspiring after those that shall be worthier and worthier.

‘ And now, O Emperor, for the same reason that we

believe God the creator did implant in us all, of all tribes and tongues, this deep desire to know, worship, and enjoy him, so that no people have ever been wholly ignorant of him, do we believe that he has, in those latter years, declared himself to mankind more plainly than he did in the origin of things, or than he does through our own reason, so that men may, by such better knowledge of himself and of all necessary truth which he has imparted, be raised to a higher virtue on earth, and made fit for a more exalted life in heaven. We believe that he has thus declared himself by him whom you have heard named as the Master and Lord of the Christian, and after whom they are called, Jesus Christ. Him, God the creator, we believe, sent into the world to teach a better religion than the world had ; and to break down and forever destroy, through the operation of his truth, a thousand injurious forms of false belief. It is this religion which we would extend, and impart to those who will open their minds to consider its claims, and their hearts to embrace its truths, when they have once been seen to be divine. This has been our task and our duty in Rome, to beseech you not blindly to receive, but strictly to examine, and, if found to be true, then humbly and gratefully to adopt this new message from above—

‘By the gods, Aurelian,’ exclaimed Porphyrius, ‘these Christians are kindly disposed ! their benevolence and their philosophy are alike. We are obliged to them —’

‘Not now, Porphyrius,’ said Aurelian. ‘Disturb not the Christian. Say on, Probus.’

‘We hope,’ continued Probus, nothing daunted by the scornful jeers of the philosopher, ‘that we are sincerely desirous of your welfare, and so pray that in the lapse

of years all may, as some have done, take at our hands the good we proffer them ; for, sure we are, that would all so receive it, Rome would tower upwards with a glory and a beauty that should make her a thousand-fold more honored and beloved than now, and her roots would strike down, and so fasten themselves in the very centre of the earth, that well might she then be called the Eternal City. Yet, O Emperor, though such is our aim and purpose ; though we would propagate a religion from God, and, in doing so, are willing to labor our lives long, and, if need be, die in the sacred cause, yet are we charged as atheists. The name by which we are known, as much as by that of Christian, is atheist — ’

‘ Such, I have surely believed you,’ said Porphyrius, again breaking in, ‘ and, at this moment, do.’

‘ But it is a name, Aurelian, fixed upon us ignorantly or slanderously ; ignorantly, I am willing to believe. We believe in a God, O Emperor ; it is to him we live, and to him we die. The charge of atheism I thus publicly deny, as do all Christians who are here, as would all throughout the world with one acclaim, were they also here, and would all seal their testimony, if need were, with their blood. We believe in God ; not in many gods, some greater and some lesser, as with you, and whose forms are known and can be set forth in images and statues — but in one, one God, the sole monarch of the universe ; whom no man, be he never so cunning, can represent in wood, or brass, or stone ; whom, so to represent in any imaginary shape, our faith denounces as unlawful and impious. Hence it is, O Emperor, because the vulgar, when they enter our churches or our houses, see there no image of god or goddess, that they

imagine we are without a God, and without his worship. And such conclusion may in them be excused. For, till they are instructed, it may not be easy for them to conceive of one God, filling Heaven and earth with his presence. But in others it is hard to see how they think us atheists on the same ground, since nothing can be plainer than that among you, the intelligent, and the philosophers especially, believe as we do in a great pervading invisible spirit of the universe. Plato worshipped not nor believed in these stone or wooden gods ; nor in any of the fables of the Greek religion ; yet who ever has charged him with atheism ? So was it with the great Longinus. I see before me those who are now famed for their science in such things, who are the teachers of Rome in them, yet not one, I may venture to declare, believes other than as Plato and Longinus did in this regard. It is an error or a calumny that has ever prevailed concerning us ; but in former times some have had the candor, when the error has been removed, to confess publicly that they had been subject to it. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius, to name no other, when, in the straits into which he was fallen at Cotinus, he charged his disasters upon the Christian soldiers, and, they praying prostrate upon the earth for him and his army and empire, he forthwith gained the victory, which before he had despaired of—did then immediately acknowledge that they had a God, and that they should no longer be reviled as atheists ; since it was plain that men might believe in a God, and carry about the image of him in their own minds, though they had no visible one. It is thus we are all believers. We carry about with us, in the sanctuary of our own bosoms, our image of the great

and almighty God whom we serve ; and before that, and that only, do we bow down and worship. Were we indeed atheists, it were not unreasonable that you dealt with us as you now do, nay and much more severely ; for, where belief in a God does not exist, it is not easy to see how any state can long hold together. The necessary bond is wanting, and, as a sheaf of wheat when the band is broken, it must fall asunder.

‘ The first principle of the religion of Christ is this belief in God ; in his righteous providence here on earth, and in a righteous retribution hereafter. How then can the religion of Christ in this respect be of dangerous influence or tendency ? It is well known to all, who are acquainted in the least with history or philosophy, that in the religion of the Jews, the belief and worship of one God almost constitutes the religion itself. Every thing else is inferior and subordinate. In this respect the religion of Jesus is like that of the Jews. It is exceeding jealous of the honor and worship of this one God — this very same God of the Jews ; for Jesus was himself a Jew, and has revealed to us the same God whom we are required to worship, only with none of the ceremonies, rites, and sacrifices, which were peculiar to that people. It is this which has caused us, equally to our and their displeasure, frequently to be confounded together, and mistaken the one for the other. But the differences between us are, excepting in the great doctrine I have just named, very great and essential. This doctrine therefore, which is the chief of all, being so fundamental with us, it is not easy, I say, to see how we can on religious accounts be dangerous to the state.

For many things are comprehended in and follow from this faith. It is not a barren, unprofitable speculation, but a practical and restraining doctrine of the greatest moral efficiency. If it be not this to us, to all and every one of us, it is not what it ought to be, and we wrongly understand or else wilfully pervert it.

‘ We believe that we are everywhere surrounded by the presence of our God : that he is our witness every moment, and everywhere conscious, as we are ourselves, of our words, acts, and thoughts ; and will bring us all to a strict account at last for whatever he has thus witnessed that has been contrary to that rigid law of holy living which he has established over us in Christ. Must not this act upon us most beneficially ? We believe that in himself he is perfect purity, and that he demands of us that we be so in our degree also. We can impute to him none of the acts, such as the believers in the Greek and Roman religions freely ascribe to their Jove, and so have not, as others have, in such divine example, a warrant and excuse for the like enormities. This one God too we also regard as our judge, who will in the end sit upon our conduct throughout the whole of our lives, and punish or reward according to what we shall have been, just as the souls of men, according to your belief, receive their sentence at the bar of Minos and Rhadamanthus. And other similar truths are wrapt up with and make a part of this great primary one. Wherefore it is most evident, that nothing can be more false and absurd than to think and speak of us as atheists, and for that reason a nuisance in the state.

‘ But it is not only that we are atheists, but that, through our atheism, we are to be looked upon as disor-

derly members of society, disturbers of the peace, disaffected and rebellious citizens, that we hear on every side. I do not believe that this charge has ever been true of any, much less of all. Or if any Christian has at any time and for any reason disobeyed the laws, withheld his taxes when they have been demanded, or neglected any duties which, as a citizen of Rome, he has owed to the Emperor, or any representative of him, then so far he has not been a Christian. Christ's kingdom is not of this world — though, because we so often and so much speak of a kingdom, we have been thought to aim at one on earth — it is above; and he requires us while here below to be obedient to the laws and the rulers that are set up over us, so far as we deem them in accordance with the everlasting laws of God and of right; to pay tribute to whomsoever it is due; here in Rome to Cæsar; and, wherever we are, to be loyal and quiet citizens of the state. And the reception of his religion tends to make such of us all. Whoever adopts the faith of the gospel of Jesus will be a virtuous, and holy, and devout man, and therefore, both in Rome, in Persia, and in India, and everywhere, a good subject.

‘ We defend not nor abet, great Emperor, the act of that holy but impetuous and passionate man, who so lately, in defiance of the imperial edict and before either remonstrance or appeal on our part, preached on the very steps of the capitol, and there committed that violence for which he hath already answered with his life. We defend him not in that; but neither do we defend, but utterly condemn and execrate the unrighteous haste, and the more than demoniac barbarity of his death. God,

we rejoice in all our afflictions to believe, is over all, and the wicked, the cruel, and the unjust, shall not escape.

‘Yet it must be acknowledged that there are higher duties than those which we owe to the state, even as there is a higher sovereign to whom we owe allegiance than the head of the state, whether that head be king, senate, or emperor. Man is not only a subject and a citizen, he is first of all the creature of God, and amenable to his laws. When therefore there is a conflict between the laws of God and the king, who can doubt which are to be obeyed?—’

‘Who does not see,’ cried Porphyrius vehemently, ‘that in such principles there lurks the blackest treason? for who but themselves are to judge when the laws of the two sovereigns do thus conflict? and what law then may be promulged, but to them it may be an offence?’

‘Let not the learned Porphyrius,’ resumed Probus, ‘rest in but a part of what I say. Let him hear the whole, and then deny the principle if he can. I say, when the law of God and the law of man are opposite the one to the other, we are not to hesitate which to obey and which to break; our first allegiance is due to Heaven. And it is true that we ourselves are to be the judges in the case. But then we are judges under the same stern laws of conscience toward God, which compel us to violate the law of the empire, though death in its most terrific form be the penalty. And is it likely therefore that we shall, for frivolous causes, or imaginary ones, or none at all, hold it to be our duty to rebel against the law of the land? To think so were to rate us low indeed. They may surely be trusted to make this decision, whose fidelity to conscience in other emer-

gences brings down upon them so heavy a load of calamity. I may appeal moreover to all, I think, who hear me, of the common faith, whether they themselves would not hold by the same principle? Suppose the case that your supreme god — “Jupiter greatest and best” — or the god beyond and above him, in whom your philosophers have faith — revealed a law, requiring what the law of the empire forbids, must you not, would you not, if your religion were anything more than a mere pretence, obey the god rather than the man? Although therefore, great Emperor, we blame the honest Macer for his precipitancy, yet it ought to be, and is, the determination of us all to yield obedience to no law which violates the law of Heaven. We having received the faith of Christ in trust, to be by us dispensed to mankind, and believing the welfare of mankind to depend upon the wide extension of it, we will rather die than shut it up in our own bosoms — we will rather die, than live with our tongues tied and silent — our limbs fettered and bound! We must speak, or we will die —’

Porphyrus again sprang from his seat with intent to speak, but the Emperor restrained him.

‘Contend not now, Porphyrus; let us hear the Christian. I have given him his freedom. Infringe it not.’

‘I will willingly, noble Emperor,’ said Probus, ‘respond to whatsoever the learned Tyrian may propose. All I can desire is this only, that the religion of Christ may be seen, by those who are here, to be what it truly is; and it may be, that the questions or the objections of the philosopher shall show this more perfectly than a continued discourse.’

The Emperor, however, making a sign, he went on.

'We have also been charged, O Emperor, with vices and crimes, committed at both our social and our religious meetings, at which nature revolts, which are even beyond in grossness what have been ever ascribed to the most flagitious of mankind.'—Probus here enumerated the many rumors which had long been and still were current in Rome, and, especially by the lower orders, believed; and drew then such a picture of the character, lives, manners, and morals of the Christians, for the truth of which he appealed openly to noble and distinguished persons among the Romans then present,—not of the Christian faith, but who were yet well acquainted with their character and condition, and who would not refuse to testify to what he had said—that there could none have been present in that vast assembly but who, if there were any sense of justice within them, must have dismissed forever from their minds, if they had ever entertained them, the slanderous fictions that had filled them.

To report to you, Fausta, this part of his defence, must be needless, and could not prove otherwise than painful. He then also refuted in the same manner other common objections alleged against the Christians and their worship; the lateness of its origin; its beggarly simplicity; the low and ignorant people who alone or chiefly, both in Rome and throughout the world, have received it; the fierce divisions and disputes among the Christians themselves; the uncertainty of its doctrines; the rigor of its morality, as unsuited to mankind; as also its spiritual worship; the slowness of its progress, and the little likelihood that, if God were its author, he would leave it to be trodden under foot and so nearly

annihilated by the very people to whom he was sending it ; these and other similar things usually urged against the Christians, and now for the first time, it is probable, by most of the Romans present, heard, refuted, and explained, did Probus set forth, both with brevity and force ; making nothing tedious by reason of a frivolous minuteness, nor yet omitting a single topic or argument, which it was due to the cause he defended, to bring before the minds of that august assembly. He then ended his appeal in the following manner :

‘ And now, great Emperor, must you have seen, in what I have already said, what the nature and character of this religion is ; for in denying and disproving the charges that have been brought against it, I have, in most particulars, alleged and explained some opposite truth or doctrine, by which it is justly characterized. But that you may be informed the more exactly for what it is you are about to persecute and destroy us, and for what it is that we cheerfully undergo torture and death sooner than surrender or deny it, listen yet a moment longer. You have heard that we are named after Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was born in Judea, and there lived and taught, a prophet and messenger of God, till he was publicly crucified by his bitter enemies the Jews. We do not doubt, nay, we all steadfastly believe, that this Jesus was the Son of the Most High God, by reason of his wonderful endowments and his delegated office as the long-looked-for Messiah of the Jews. As the evidences of his great office and of his divine origin, he performed those miracles that filled with astonishment the whole Jewish nation, and strangers from all parts of

the world ; and so wrought even upon the mind of your great predecessor, the Emperor Tiberius, that he would fain receive him into the number of the gods of Rome. And why, O Emperor, was this great personage sent forth into the world, encircled by the rays of divine power and wisdom and goodness, an emanation of the self-existent and infinite God ? And why do we so honor him, and cleave to him, that we are ready to offer our lives in sacrifice, while we go forth as preachers of his faith, making him known to all nations as the universal Saviour and Redeemer ? This Jesus came into the world, and lived and taught ; was preceded by so long a preparation of prophetic annunciation, and accompanied by so sublime demonstrations of almighty power, to this end, and to this end only, that he might save us from our sins, and from those penal consequences in this world and in worlds to come, which are bound to them by the stern decrees of fate. Yes, Aurelian, Jesus came only that he might deliver mankind from the thralldom of every kind of wickedness, and raise them to a higher condition of virtue and happiness. He was a great moral and religious teacher and reformer, endowed with the wisdom and power of the supreme God. He himself toiled only in Judea ; but he came a benefactor of Rome too—of Rome as well as of Judea. He came to purge it of its pollutions ; to check in their growth those customs and vices which seem destined, reaching their natural height and size, to overlay and bury in final ruin the city and the empire ; he came to make us citizens of Heaven through the virtues which his doctrine should build up in the soul, and so citizens of Rome more worthy of that name than any who ever

went before. He came to heal, to mend, to reform the state ; not to set up a kingdom in hostility to this, but in unison with it ; an inward, invisible kingdom in every man's heart, which should be as the soul of the other.

‘ It was to reform the morals of the state, to save it from itself, that you, Aurelian, in the first years of your reign, applied those energies that have raised the empire to more than its ancient glory. You aimed to infuse a love of justice and of peace, to abate the extravagances of the times, to stem the tide of corruption that seemed about to bear down upon its foul streams the empire itself, tossing upon its surface a wide sea of ruin. It was a great work — too great for man. It needed a divine strength and a more than human wisdom. These were not yours ; and it is no wonder that the work did not go on to its completion. Jesus is a reformer ; of Rome and of the world also. The world is his theatre of action ; but with him there is leagued the arm and the power of the Supreme God ; and the work which he attempts shall succeed. It cannot but succeed. It is not so much he, Jesus of Nazareth, who has come forth upon this great errand of mercy and love to mankind, as God himself in and through him. It is the Great God of the Universe, who, by Jesus Christ as his agent and messenger, comes to you, and would reform and redeem your empire, and out of that which is transitory, and by its inherent vice threatened with decay and death, make a city and an empire which, through the energy of its virtues, shall truly be eternal. Can you not, O Emperor, supposing the claims of this religion to a divine origin to be just, view it with respect ? Nay, could you not greet its approach to your capital

with pleasure and gratitude, seeing its aim is nothing else than this, to purify, purge, and reform the state, to heal its wounds, cleanse its putrifying members, and infuse the element of a new and healthier life? Methinks a true patriot and lover of Rome must rejoice when any power approaches and offers to apply those remedies that may, with remotest probability only, bid fair to cure the diseases of which her body is sick, nigh unto death.

‘Such, Aurelian, was and is the aim of Jesus, in the religion which he brought. And of us, who are his ministers, his messengers — who go forth bearing these glad tidings of deliverance from sin and corruption, and of union with God — our work is the same with his. We but repeat the lessons which he gave. Are we, in so doing, enemies of Rome? Are we not rather her truest friends? By making men good, just, kind, and honest, are we not at the same time making them the best citizens? Are there in Rome better citizens than the Christians?’

‘You will now perhaps, Aurelian, desire to be told by what instruments Christianity hopes to work such changes. It is simply, O Emperor, by the power of truth! The religion which we preach uses not force. Were the arm of Aurelian at this moment the arm of Probus, he could do no more than he now does with one, which, as the world deems, is in the comparison powerless as an infant’s. In all that pertains to the soul, and its growth and purification, there must be utmost freedom. The soul must suffer no constraint. There must be no force laid upon it, but the force of reason and the appeal of divine truth. All that we ask or want in Rome is the liberty of speech — the free allowance to

offer to men the truth in Christ, and persuade them to consider it. With that we will engage to reform and save the whole world. We want not to meddle with affairs of state, nor with the citizen's relations to the state; we have naught to do with the city, or its laws, or government, beyond what was just now stated. We desire but the privilege to worship God according to our consciences, and labor for the moral welfare of all who will hear our words.

‘ And if you would know what the truth is we impart, and by which we would save the souls of men, and reform the empire and the world, be it known to you that we preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, whom God raised up and sent into the world to save it by his doctrine and life, and whom—being by the Jews hung upon a cross—God raised again from the dead. We preach him as the Son of God with power, by whom God has been revealed to mankind in his true nature and perfections, and through whom, he and he only is to be worshipped. In the place of Jupiter, we bring you a revelation of the God and Father of Christ Jesus our Lord—creator of the universe, who will call all men into judgment ~~and~~ last, rewarding or punishing according to what they have done. Through Jesus, we preach also a resurrection from the dead. We show, by arguments which cannot be refuted, that this Jesus, when he had been crucified and slain, and had lain three days in the tomb, was called again to life, and taken up to Heaven, as an example of what should afterwards happen to all his followers. Through him has immortality been plainly brought to light and proved, and this transporting truth we declare wherever we go. Through Jesus,

we preach also repentance ; we declare to men their wickedness ; we show them what and how great it is ; and exhort them to repentance, as what can alone save them from the wrath to come.

‘ This, O Emperor, is the great work which we, as apostles of Jesus, have to do, to convince the world how vile it is ; how surely their wickedness, unrepented of, will work their misery and their ruin, and so lead them away from it, and up the safe and pleasant heights of Christian virtue. We find Rome sunk in sensuality and sin ; nor only that, but ignorant of its own guilt, dead to the wickedness into which it has fallen, and denying any obligations to a different or better life. Such do we find, indeed, not Rome only, but the world itself, dead in trespasses and sin. We would rouse it from this sleep of death. We desire, first of all, to waken in the souls of men a perception of the guilt of sin ! a feeling of the wide departure of their lives from the just demands of the being who made them. The prospect of immortality were nothing without this. Longer life were but a greater evil were we not made alive to sin and righteousness. Life on earth, Aurelian, is not the best thing, but virtuous life : so life without end is not the best thing, but life without fault or sin. But to the necessity of such a life men are now insensible and dead. They love the prospect of an immortal existence, but not of that purity without which immortality were no blessing. But it is this moral regeneration — this waking up of men dead in sin, to the life of righteousness, which is the great aim of Christianity. Repentance ! was the first word of its founder when he began preaching in Judea ; it is the first word of his followers wherever they go,

and should be the last. This, O Aurelian, in few words, is the gospel of Jesus — “Repent and live forever !”

‘In the service of this gospel, and therefore of you and the world, we are content to labor while we live, to suffer injury and reproach, and if need be, and they to whom we go will not understand us, lay down our lives. Almost three hundred years has it appealed to mankind ; and though not with the success that should have followed upon the labor of those who have toiled for the salvation of men, yet has it not been rejected everywhere, nor has the labor been in vain. The fruit that has come of the seed sown is great and abundant. In every corner of the earth are there now those who name the name of Christ. And in every place are there many more, than meet the eye, who read our gospels, believe in them, and rejoice in the virtue and the hope which have taken root in their souls. Here in Rome, O Aurelian, are there multitudes of believers, whom the ear hears not, nor the eye sees, hidden away in the security of this sea of roofs, whom the messengers of your power never could discover. Destroy us, you may ; sweep from the face of Rome every individual whom the most diligent search can find, from the gray-haired man of fourscore to the infant that can just lisp the name of Jesus, and you have not destroyed the Christians ; the Christian church still stands—not unharmed, but founded as before upon a rock, against which the powers of earth and hell can never prevail ; and soon as this storm shall have overblown, those other, and now secret, multitudes, of whom I speak, will come forth, and the wilderness of the church shall blossom again as

a garden in the time of spring. God is working with us, and who therefore can prevail against us !

‘Bring not then, Aurelian, upon your own soul ; bring not upon Rome, the guilt that would attend this unnecessary slaughter. It can but defer for an hour or a day the establishment of that kingdom of righteousness, which must be established, because it is God’s, and he is laying its foundations and building its walls. Have pity too, great Emperor, upon this large multitude of those who embrace this faith, and who will not let it go for all the terrors of your courts and judges and engines ; they will all suffer the death of Macer ere they will prove false to their Master. Let not the horrors of that scene be renewed, nor the greater ones of an indiscriminate massacre. I implore your compassions, not for myself, but for these many thousands, who, by my ministry, have been persuaded to receive this faith. For them my heart bleeds ; them I would save from the death which impends. Yet it is a glorious and a happy death, to die for truth and Christ ! It is better to die so, knowing that by such death the very church itself is profited, than to die in one’s own bed, and only to one’s self. So do these thousands think ; and whatever compassion I may implore for them, they would each and all, were such their fate, go with cheerful step, as those who went to some marriage supper, to the axe, to the stake, or the cross. Christianity cannot die but with the race itself. Its life is bound up in the life of man, and man must be destroyed ere that can perish. Behold then, Aurelian, the labor that is thine !’

Soon as he had ceased, Porphyrius started from his seat and said,

‘It is then, O Romans, just as it has ever been affirmed. The Galileans are atheists! They believe not in the gods of Rome, nor in any in whom mankind can ever have belief. I doubt not but they think themselves believers in a God. They think themselves to have found one better than others have; but upon any definition, that I or you could give or understand, of atheism, they are atheists! Their God is invisible; he is a universal spirit, like this circumambient air; of no form, dwelling in no place. But how can that without effrontery be called a being, which is without body and form; which is everywhere and yet nowhere; which, from the beginning of the world has never been heard of, till by these Nazarenes he is now first brought to light, or, if older, exists in the dreams of the dreaming Jews, whose religion, as they term it, is so stuffed with fable, that one might not expect, after the most exact and laborious search, to meet with so much as a grain of truth. Yet, whatever these Galileans may assert, their speech is hardly to be received as worthy of belief, when, in their very sacred records, such things are to be found as contradict themselves. For in one place — not to mention a thousand cases of the like kind — it is said that Jesus, the head of this religion, on a certain occasion walked upon the sea; when, upon sifting the narrative, it is found that it was but upon a paltry lake, the lake of Galilee, upon which he performed that great feat! — a thing to which the magic of which he is accused — and doubtless with justice — was plainly equal; while to walk upon the sea might well have been beyond that science. How much of what we have heard is to be distrusted also, concerning the love which these

Nazarenes bear to Rome. We may well pray to be delivered from the affection of those, whose love manifests itself in the singular manner of seeking our destruction. He who loves me so well as to poison me that I may have the higher enjoyment of Elysium, I could hardly esteem as a well-wisher or friend. These Jewish fanatics love us after somewhat the same fashion. In the zeal of their affection they would make us heirs of what they call their heavenly kingdom, but in the meanwhile destroy our religion, deprive us of our ancient gods, and sap the foundations of the state.

‘Romans, in spite of all you have heard of another sort, I hope you will still believe that experience is one of your most valuable teachers, and that therefore you will be slow to forsake opinions which have the sanction of venerable age, under which you have flourished so happily, and your country grown to so amazing a height of glory and renown. I think you would deserve the fate which this new-made religion would bring you to, if you abandoned the worship of a thousand years, for the presumptuous novelty of yesterday. Not a name of greatness or honor can be quoted of those who have adorned this foreign fiction; while all the great and good of Greece and Rome, philosophers, moralists, historians, and poets, are to be found on the side of Hellenism. If we cast from us that which we have experienced to be good, by what rule and on what principle can we afterward put our trust in anything else? And it is considerable, that which has ever been asserted of this people, and which I doubt not is true, that they have ever been prying about with their doctrines and their mysteries among the poor and humbler sort, among wo-

men, slaves, simple and unlearned folks, while they have never appealed to, nor made any converts of, the great and the learned, who alone are capable of judging of the truth of such things.

‘ Who are the believers here in Rome ? Who knows them ? Are the sacred Senate Christians ? or any distinguished for their rank ? No ; with exceptions, too few to be noticed, those who embrace it are among the dregs of the people, men wholly incapable of separating true from false, and laying properly the safe foundations of a new religion — a work too great even for philosophers. And not only does this religion draw to itself the poor and humble and ignorant, but the base and wicked also ; persons known, while of our way, to have been notorious for their vices, have all of a sudden joined themselves to the Christians ; and whatever show of sanctity may then have been assumed, we may well suppose there has not been much of the reality. Long may it boast of such members, and while its brief life lasts make continually such converts from us. As to the amazing pretences they make of their benevolence in the care of the poor, and even of our poor, doing more offices of kindness toward them — so it is affirmed — than we ourselves — who does not see the motive that prompts so much charity, in the good opinion they build up for themselves in those whom they have so much obliged, and who cannot in decency do less afterward than oblige them in turn, by joining their superstitions — superstitions of which they know nothing before they adopt them, and as little afterward.

‘ But I will not, O Emperor, weary out your patience

again — already so long tried — and will only say, that the fate which has all along and everywhere befallen these people, might well warn them that they are objects of the anger rather than the favor and love of the Lord of Heaven, of which they so confidently make their boast. For if he loved them would he leave them everywhere so to the rage and destruction of their enemies — to be reviled, trodden upon, and despised, all over the earth? If these be the signs of love, what are those of hate? And can it be that he, their Lord of Heaven, hath in store for them a world of bliss beyond this life, who gives them here on earth scarce the sordid shelter of a cabin? In truth, they seem to be a community living upon their imaginations. They fancy themselves favorites of Heaven — though all the world thinks otherwise. They fancy themselves the greatest benefactors the world has ever seen, while they are the only ones who think so. They have nothing here but persecution, contempt, and hatred, and yet are anticipating a more glorious Elysium than the greatest and best of earth have ever dared to hope for. We cannot but hope they may be at some time the riddle to themselves which they are to us. This is a benevolent wish, for their entertainment would be great.'

When he had ended, and almost before, many voices were heard of those who wished to speak, and Probus rose in his place to reply to what had fallen from the philosopher, but all were alike silenced by the loud and stern command of Aurelian, who, evidently weary and impatient of further audience of what he was so little willing to hear at all, cried out, saying,

'The Christians, Romans, have now been heard, as

they desired, by one whom they themselves appointed to set forth their doctrine. This is no school for the disputations of sophists or philosophers or fanatics. Let Romans and Christians alike withdraw.'

Whereupon, without further words or delay, the assembly broke up.

It was not difficult to see that the statements and reasonings of Probus had fallen upon many who heard them with equal surprise and delight. Every word that he uttered was heard with an eager attention I never before saw equaled. I have omitted the greater part of what he said, especially where he went with minuteness into an account of the history, doctrine, and precept of our faith, knowing it to be too familiar to you to make it desirable to have it repeated.

It was in part at least owing to an unwillingness to allow Probus again to address that audience, representing all the rank and learning of Rome, that the Emperor so hastily dissolved the assembly. Whatever effect the hearing of Probus may have upon him or upon us, there is reason to believe that its effects will be deep and abiding upon the higher classes of our inhabitants. They then heard what they never heard before — a full and an honest account of what Christianity is ; and, from what I have already been informed, and gathered indeed from my own observation at the time, they now regard it with very different sentiments.

When, late in the evening of this day, we conversed of its events, Probus being seated with us, we indulged both in those cheering and desponding thoughts which

seem to be strangely mingled together in our present calamities.

‘No opinion,’ said Julia, ‘has been more strongly confirmed within me by this audience before Aurelian, than this, that it has been of most auspicious influence upon our faith. Not that some have not been filled with a bitterer spirit than before ; but that more have been favorably inclined toward us by the disclosures, Probus, which you made ; and whether they become Christians or not eventually, they will be far more ready to defend us in our claim for the common rights of citizens. Marcellinus, who sat near me, was of this number. He expressed frequently, in most emphatic terms, his surprise at what he heard, which, he said, he was constrained to admit as true and fair statements, seeing they were supported and corroborated by my and your presence and silence. At the close he declared his purpose to procure the gospels for his perusal.’

‘And yet,’ said I, ‘the late consul Capitolinus, who was at my side, and whose clear and intelligent mind is hardly equaled here in Rome, was confirmed — even as Porphyrius was, or pretended to be — in all his previous unfavorable impressions. He did not disguise his opinion, but freely said, that in his judgment the religion ought to be suppressed, and that, though he should by no means defend any measures like those which he understood Aurelian had resolved to put in force, he should advocate such action in regard to it, as could not fail to expel it from the empire in no very great number of years.’

‘I could observe,’ added Probus, ‘the same differences of feeling and judgment all over the surface of that sea

of faces. But if I should express my belief as to the proportion of friends and enemies there present, I should not hesitate to say — and that I am sure without any imposition upon my own credulity — that the greater part by far were upon our side — not in faith as you may suppose — but in that good opinion of us, and of the tendencies of our doctrine and the value of our services, that is very near it, and is better than the public profession of Christ of many others.'

'It will be a long time, I am persuaded,' said Julia, 'before the truths received then into many minds will cease to operate in our behalf. But what think you was the feeling of Aurelian? His countenance was hidden from me — yet that would reveal not much. It is immovable at those times, when he is deeply stirred, or has any motive to conceal his sentiments.'

'I cannot believe,' replied Probus, 'that any impression, such as we could wish, was made upon that hard and cruel heart. Not the brazen statue, against the base of which he leaned, stood in its place more dead to whatever it was that came from my lips than he. He has not been moved, we may well believe, to change any of his designs. Whatever yesterday it was in his intent to do, he will accomplish tomorrow. I do not believe we have anything to hope at his hands.'

'Alas, Lucius!' said Julia, 'that our faith in Christ, and our interest and concern for its progress in Rome, should after all come to this. How happy was I in Syria, with this belief as my bosom companion and friend; and free, too, to speak of it, to any and to all. How needless is all the misery which this rude, unlettered tyrant is about to inflict! How happily for all, would

things take their course even here, might they but be left to run in those natural channels which would reveal themselves, and which would then conduct to those ends which the Divine Providence has proposed. But man wickedly interposes ; and a misery is inflicted, which otherwise would have never fallen upon us, and which in the counsels of God was never designed. What now think you, Probus, will be the event ?

‘ I cannot doubt,’ he replied, ‘ that tomorrow will witness all that report has already spread abroad as the purpose of Aurelian. Urged on by both Fronto and Varus, he will not pause in his course. Rome, ere the Ides, will swim in Christian blood. I see not whence deliverance is to come. Miracle alone could save us ; and miracle has long since ceased to be the order of Providence. Having provided for us this immense instrument of moral reform in the authority and doctrine of Christ, we are now left, as doubtless it is on the whole best for our character and our virtues we should be, to our own unassisted strength, to combat with all the evils that may assail us, both from without and within. For myself, I can meet this tempest without a thought of reluctance or dread. I am a solitary man ; having neither child nor relative to mourn my loss ; I have friends indeed, whom I love, and from whom I would not willingly part ; but, if any considerable purpose is to be gained by my death to that cause for which I have lived, neither I nor they can lament that it should occur. Under these convictions as to my own fate—and that of all, must I say and believe ? no ; I cannot, will not, believe that humanity has taken its final departure from the bosom of Aurelian — I turn to one

bright spot, and there my thoughts dwell, and there my hopes gather strength, and that is here where you, Piso, and you, lady, will still dwell, too high for the aim of the imperial murderer to reach. Here I shall believe will there be an asylum for many a wearied spirit, a safe refuge from the sharp pelting of the storm without. And when a calm shall come again, from beneath this roof, as once from the ark of God, shall there go forth those who shall again people the waste-places of the church, and change the wilderness of death into a fruitful garden full of the plants of Heaven.'

'That it is the present purpose of Aurelian to spare me,' I answered, 'whatever provocation I may give him, I fully believe. He is true; and his word to that end, with no wish expressed on my part, has been given. But do not suppose that in that direction at least he may not change his purpose. Superstitiously mad as he now is, a mere plaything too in the bloody hands of Fronto — and nothing can well be esteemed as more insecure than even my life, privileged and secure as it may seem. If it should occur to him, in his day or his night visions and dreams, that I, more than others, should be an acceptable offering to his god, my life would be to him but that of an insect buzzing around his ear; and being dead by a blow, he would miss me no more. Still, let the mercy that is vouchsafed, whether great or little, be gratefully confessed.'

You then see, Fausta, the position in which your old friends now stand here in Rome. Who could have believed, when we talked over our dangers in Palmyra, that greater and more dreadful still awaited us in our own home. It has come upon us with such sudden-

ness that we can scarce believe it ourselves. Yet are we prepared, with an even mind and a trusting faith, for whatever may betide.

It is happy for me, and for Julia, that our religion has fixed within us so firm a belief in a superintending Providence — who orders not only the greatest but the least events of life, who is as much concerned for the happiness and the moral welfare of the humblest individual, as he is for the orderly movement of a world — that we sit down under the shadows that overhang us, perfectly convinced that some end of good to the church or the world is to be achieved through these convulsions, greater than could have been achieved in any other way. The Supreme Ruler, we believe, is infinitely wise and infinitely good. But he would be neither, if unnecessary suffering were meted out to his creatures. This suffering then is not unnecessary. But through it, in ways which our sight now is not piercing enough to discern — but may hereafter be — shall a blessing redound both to the individuals concerned, to the present generation, and a remote posterity, which could not otherwise have been secured. This we must believe; or we must renounce all belief.

Forget not to remember us with affection to Gracchus and Calpurnius.

I also was present at the hearing of Probus. But of that I need say nothing; Piso having so fully written concerning it to the daughter of Gracchus.

Early on the following day I was at the Gardens of

Sallust, where I was present both with the Emperor and Livia, and with the Emperor and Fronto, and heard conversations which I here record.

When I entered the apartment, in which it was customary for the Empress to sit at this time of the day, I found her there engaged upon her embroidery, while the Emperor paced back and forth, his arms crossed behind him, and care and anxiety marked upon his countenance. Livia, though she sat quietly at her work, seemed ill at ease, and as if some thought were busy within, to which she would gladly give utterance. She was evidently relieved by my entrance, and immediately made her usual inquiries after the health of the Queen, in which Aurelian joined her.

Aurelian then turned to me and said,

‘I saw you yesterday at the Palatine, Nicomachus; what thought you of the Christian’s defence?’

‘It did not convert me to his faith—’

‘Neither, by the gods! did it me,’ quickly interrupted Aurelian.

‘But,’ I went on, ‘it seemed to show good cause why they should not be harshly or cruelly dealt with. He proved them to be a harmless people, if not positively profitable to the state.’

‘I do not see that,’ replied the Emperor. ‘It is impossible they should be harmless who sap the foundations of religion; it is impossible they should be profitable who seduce from their allegiance the good subjects of the empire; and this religion of the Christians does both.’

‘I agree that it is so,’ I rejoined, ‘if it is to be as-

sumed in the controversy that the prevailing religion of the Romans is a perfect one, and that any addition or alteration is necessarily an evil. That seems to be the position of Porphyrius and others. But to that I can by no means assent. It seems to me that the religions of mankind are susceptible of improvement as governments are, and other like institutions; that what may be perfectly well suited to a nation in one stage of its growth, may be very ill adapted to another; that the gods in their providence accordingly design that one form of religious worship and belief should in successive ages be superseded by others, which shall be more exactly suited to their larger growth, and more urgent and very different necessities. The religion of the early days of Rome was perhaps all that so rude a people were capable of comprehending — all that they wanted. It worked well for them, and you have reason for gratitude that it was bestowed upon them, and has conferred so great benefits upon the preceding centuries. But the light of the sun is not clearer than it is that, for this present passing age, that religion is stark naught.'

The Emperor frowned, and stood still in his walk, looking sternly upon me; but I heeded him not.

'Most, of any intelligence and reflection,' I continued, 'spurn it away from them as fit but for children and slaves. Must they then be without any principle of this kind? Is it safe for a community to grow up without faith in a superintending power, from whom they come, to whom they are responsible? I think not. In any such community — and Rome is becoming such a one — the elements of disruption, anarchy, and ruin, are there at work, and will overthrow it. A society of

atheists is a contradiction in terms. Atheists may live alone, but not together. Will you compel your subjects to become such? If a part remain true to the ancient faith, and find it to be sufficient, will you deny to the other part the faith which they crave, and which would be sufficient for them? I doubt if that were according to the dictates of wisdom and philosophy. And how know you, Aurelian, that this religion of Christ may not be the very principle which, and which alone, may save your people from atheism, and your empire from the ruin that would bring along in its train?

‘I cannot deny,’ said the Emperor in reply, ‘that there is some sense and apparent truth in what you have said. But to me it is shadowy and intangible. It is the speculation of that curious class among men, who, never satisfied with what exists, are always desiring some new forms of truth, in religion, in government, and all subjects of that nature. I could feel no more certain of going or doing right by conforming to their theories, than I feel now in adhering to what is already established. Nay, I can see safety nowhere but in what already is. There is the only certainty. Suppose some enthusiast in matters of government were to propose his system, by which the present established institutions were all to be abandoned and new ones set up, should I permit him to go freely among the people, puzzling their heads with what it is impossible they should understand, and by his sophistries alienating them from their venerable parent? Not so, by Hercules! I should ill deserve my office of supreme guardian of the honor and liberties of Rome, did I not mew him up

in the Fabrician dungeons, or send him lower still to the Stygian shades.'

'But,' said Livia, who had seemed anxious to speak, 'though it may be right, and best for the interests of Rome, to suppress this new worship, yet why, Aurelian, need it be done at such expense of life? Can no way be devised by which the professors of this faith shall be banished, for instance, the realm, and no new teachers of it permitted to enter it afterward but at the risk of life, or some other appointed penalty? Sure I am, from what I heard from the Christian Probus, and what I have heard so often from the lips of Julia, this people cannot be the sore in the body of the state which Fronto represents them.'

'I cannot, Livia,' replied the Emperor, 'refuse to obey what to me have been warnings from the gods.'

'But may not the heavenly signs have been read amiss?' rejoined Livia.

'There is no truth in augury; if my duty be not where I have placed it,' answered Aurelian.

'And perhaps, Aurelian,' said the Empress, 'there is none. I have heard that the priests of the temples play many a trick upon their devout worshippers.'

'Livia, it has doubtless been so; but you would not believe that Fronto has trifled with Aurelian?'

'I believe Fronto capable of any crime by which the gods may be served. Have you not heard, Aurelian, what fell from the dying Christian's lips?'

'I have, Livia; and have cast it from me as at best the coinage of a moonstruck mountebank. Shall the word of such a one as Macer the Christian, unseat my

trust in such a one as Fronto? That were not reasonable, Livia.'

'Then, Aurelian, if not for any reason that I can give, for the love you bear me, withhold your hand from this innocent people. You have often asked me to crave somewhat which it would be hard for you to grant, that you might show how near you hold me. Grant me this favor, and it shall be more to me than if you gave me the one half the empire.'

The Emperor's stern countenance relaxed, and wore for a moment that softened expression, accompanied by a smile, that on his face might be termed beautiful. He was moved by the unaffected warmth and winning grace with which those words were spoken by Livia. But he only said,

'I love thee, Livia, as thou knowest, — but not so well as Rome or the gods.'

'I would not, Aurelian,' replied the Empress, 'that love of me should draw you away from what you owe to Rome — from what is the clear path of a monarch's duty; but this seems at best a doubtful case. They who are equally Roman in their blood differ here. It is not wrong to ask you, for my sake, to lean to the side of mercy.'

'You are never wrong, Livia. And were it only right to —'

'But are you not, Aurelian, always sure of being right in being merciful? Can it ever afterward repent you that you drew back from the shedding of blood?'

'It is called mercy, Livia, when he who has the power spares the culprit, forgives the offence, and sends him

from the gibbet or the cross back to his weeping friends. The crowds throw up their caps and shout as for some great and good deliverance. But the mercy that returns upon the world a villain, whose crimes had richly earned for him his death, is hardly a doubtful virtue. Though, as is well known, I am not famed for mercy, yet were it clear to me what in this case were the truest mercy — for the pleasure, Livia, of pleasuring thee, I would be merciful. But I should not agree with thee in what is mercy. It were no mercy to Rome, as I judge, to spare these Christians, whatever the grace might be to them. Punishment is often mercy. In destroying these wretches I am merciful both to Rome and to the world, and shall look to have their thanks.'

'There comes, Aurelian,' said Livia, rising, 'thy evil genius — thy ill-possessing demon — who has so changed the kindly current of thy blood. I would that he, who so loves the gods, were with them. I cannot wait him.'

With these words Livia rose and left the apartment, just as Fronto entered in another direction.

'Welcome, Fronto!' said Aurelian. 'How thrive our affairs?'

'As we could wish, great Emperor. The city with us, and the gods with us, — we cannot but prosper. A few days will see great changes.'

'How turns out the tale of Curio? What find you to be the truth? Are the Christians here, or are they fled?'

'His tale was partly false and partly true. More are fled than Piso or the Christians will allow; but doubtless the greater part, by large odds, remain.'

'That is well. Then for the other side of this great

duty. Is thine own house purged? Is the temple, new and of milk-white marble, now as clean and white in its priesthood? Have those young sots and pimps yet atoned for their foul impieties?’

‘They have,’ replied Fronto. ‘They have been dealt with; and their carcases swinging and bleaching in the wind will long serve I trust to keep us sweet. The temple, I now may believe, is thoroughly swept.’

‘And how is it, Fronto, with the rest?’

‘The work goes on. Your messengers are abroad; and it will be neither for want of power, will, nor zeal, if from this time Hellenism stands not before the world as beautiful in her purity as she is venerable in years and truth.’

‘The gods be praised that I have been stirred up to this! When this double duty shall be done, Hellenism reformed, and her enemy extinct, then may I say that life has not been spent for naught. But meanwhile, Fronto, the army needs me. All is prepared, and letters urge me on. To-morrow I would start for Thrace. Yet it cannot be so soon.’

‘No,’ said the priest. ‘Rome will need you more than Thrace, till the edicts have been published, and the work well begun. Then, Aurelian, may it be safely entrusted, so far as zeal and industry shall serve, to those behind.’

‘I believe it, Fronto. I see myself doubly reflected in thee: and almost so in Varus. The Christians, were I gone, would have four Aurelians for one. Well, let us rejoice that piety is not dead. The sacrifice this morning was propitious. I feel its power in every thought and movement.’

‘But while all things else seem propitious, Aurelian, one keeps yet a dark and threatening aspect.’

‘What mean you?’

‘Piso! —’

‘Fronto, I have in that made known my will, and more than once. Why again dispute it?’

‘I know no will, great Cæsar, that may rightly cross or surmount that of the gods. They, to me, are supreme, not Aurelian.’

Aurelian moved from the priest, and paced the room.

‘I see not, Fronto, with such plainness the will of Heaven in this.’

‘’Tis hard to see the divine will, when the human will and human affections are so strong.’

‘My aim is to please the gods in all things,’ replied the Emperor.

‘Love too, Aurelian, blinds the eye, and softening the heart toward our fellow, hardens it toward the gods.’ This he uttered with a strange significancy.

‘I think, Fronto, mine has been all too hard toward man, if it were truly charged. At least, of late, the gods can have no ground of blame.’

‘Rome,’ replied the priest, ‘is not slow to see and praise the zeal that is now crowning her seven hills with a greater glory than ever yet has rested on them. Let her see that her great son can finish what has been so well begun.’

‘Fronto, I say it, but I say it with some inward pain, that were it plain the will of the gods were so —’

‘Piso should die!’ eagerly interrupted the priest.

‘I will not say it yet, Fronto.’

‘I see not why Aurelian should stagger at it. If the

will of the gods is in this whole enterprise ; if they will that these hundreds and thousands, these crowds of young and old, little children and tender youth, should all perish, that posterity by such sacrifice now in the beginning may be delivered from the curse that were else entailed upon them, then who can doubt, to whom truth is the chief thing, that they will, nay, and ordain in their sacred breasts, that he who is their chief and head, about whom others cluster, from whose station and power they daily draw fresh supplies of courage, should perish too ; nay, that he should be the first great offering, that so, the multitudes who stay their weak faith on him, may, on his loss, turn again unharmed to their ancient faith. That too, were the truest mercy.'

'There may be something in that, Fronto. Nevertheless, I do not yet see so much to rest upon one life. If all the rest were dead, and but one alive, and he Piso, I see not but the work were done.'

'A thousand were better left, Aurelian, than Piso and the lady Julia ! They are more in the ears and eyes of Rome than all the preachers of this accursed tribe. They are preaching, not on their holydays to a mob of beggarly knaves, men and women dragged up by their hot and zealous caterers from the lanes and kennels of the city, within the walls of their filthy synagogues, but they preach every day, to the very princes and nobles of the state — at the capitol to the Senate — here in thy palaces to all the greatest and best of Rome ; and, by the gods ! as I believe, make more converts to their impieties than all the army of their atheistical priesthood. Upon Probus, Piso, and Julia, hang the Christians of Rome. Hew them away, and the

branches die. Probus, ere to-morrow's sun is set, feeds the beasts of the Flavian — then —'

'Hold, Fronto! I will no more of it now. I have, besides, assured Piso of his safety.'

'There is no virtue like that of those, who, having erred, repent.'

Aurelian looked for the moment as if he would willingly have hurled Fronto, and his temple after him, to Tartarus. But the bold man heeded him not.

'Shall I,' he continued, 'say what it is that thus ties the hands of the conqueror of the world?'

'Say what thou wilt.'

'Rome says, I say it not — but Rome says, 'tis love.'

'What mean they? I take you not. Love?'

'Of the princess Julia, still so called.'

A deep blush burned upon the cheek of Aurelian. He paused a moment, as if for some storm within to subside. He then said, in his deep tone, that indicates the presence of the whole soul — but without passion—

'Fronto, 'tis partly true — truer than I wish it were. When in Syria my eye first beheld her, I loved her — as I never loved before, and never shall again. But not for the Emperor of the world would she part from young Piso. I sued, as man never sued before, but all in vain. Her image still haunts the chambers of my brain; yet, with truth do I say it, but as some pure vision sent from the gods. I confess, Fronto, it is she who stands between me and the will of Heaven. I know not what force, but that of all the gods, could make me harm her. To no other ear has this ever been revealed. She is to me god and goddess.'

'Now, Aurelian, that thou has spoken in the fullness

of thy heart, do I hold thee redeemed from the invisible tyrant. In our own hearts we sin and err, as we dare not when the covering is off, and others can look in and see how weak we are. Thou canst not, great Cæsar, for this fondness forget and put far from thee the vision of thy mother, whom, in dreams or in substantial shape, the gods sent down to revive thy fainting zeal ! Let it not be that that call shall have been in vain.'

'Fronto, urge now no more. Hast thou seen Varus ?'

'I have.'

'Are the edicts ready ?'

'They are.'

'Again then at the hour of noon let them glare forth upon the enemies of Rome from the columns of the capitol. Let Varus be so instructed. Now I would be alone.'

Whereupon the priest withdrew, and I also rose from where I had sat, to take my leave, when the Emperor said,

'This seems harsh to thee, Nicomachus ?'

'I cannot but pray the gods,' I said, 'to change the mind of Aurelian !'

'They have made his mind what it is, Nicomachus.'

'Not they,' I said, 'but Fronto.'

'But,' he quickly added, 'the gods made Fronto, and have put their mind in him, or it has never been known on earth. You know not the worth, Greek, of this man. Had Rome possessed such a one two hundred years ago, this work had not now to be done.'

Saying which, he withdrew into his inner apartment, and I sought again the presence of Livia.

LETTER XI.

FROM PISO TO FAUSTA.

A DAY has passed, Fausta, since the hearing of Probus, and I hasten to inform you of its events.

But, first of all, before I enter upon the dark chapter of our calamities, let me cheer you and myself by dwelling a moment upon one bright and sunny spot. Early in the day we were informed that Isaac was desirous to see us. He was at once admitted. As he entered, it was easy to see that some great good fortune had befallen him. His face shone through the effect of some inward joy, and his eyes sparkled in their deep sockets like burning tapers. When our customary salutations and inquiries were over, Julia said to him,

‘I think, Isaac, you must have sold a jewel this morning to no less a person than Aurelian, if the face may be held as an index of good or evil fortune.’

‘I have parted with no jewel, lady,’ he replied, ‘but there has fallen into my hands a diamond of inestimable value, drawn from those mines of the Orient, which I may say, not all the wealth of Aurelian could purchase of me. Whenever I shall receive such permission, it will give me highest delight to show it to thee.’

‘Only a single jewel, Isaac?’ said Julia. ‘Is it but one stone that so transports thee, and makes thy face that of a young man?’

‘Lady, to confess the truth, there are four — four liv-

ing stones and precious — more precious than any that of old blazed upon the breastplate of our high-priest. Princess, I have come to tell thee and Piso what none in Rome besides, as I think, would care to know — and strange it is that you Christians should be those whom I, a Jew, most love, and that I, an old and worn-out man, should fill any space, were it no bigger than a grain of wheat, in your regards — I have come to tell you what you have already discovered, that Hagar is arrived with the young Ishmael, and with them two dark-eyed daughters of Israel, who are as welcome as the others. There is not now, Piso, within the walls of Rome a dwelling happier than mine. Soon as leisure and inclination shall serve, come, if you will do us such grace, to the street Janus, and behold our contentment. Sorry am I that the times come laden to you with so many terrors. Piso,' continued he, in a more earnest tone, and bending toward me, 'rely upon the word of one who is rarely deceived, and who now tells thee, there is a sword hanging over thy head! Fronto thirsts for thy life, and thine, lady! and Aurelian, much as he may love you, is, as we have already seen, not proof against the violent zeal of the priest. Come to the street Janus, and I will warrant you safety and life. There is none for you here — nor in Rome — if Aurelian's hounds can scent you.'

We were again obliged to state, with all the force we could give to them, the reasons which bound us to remain, not only in Rome, but in our own dwelling, and await whatever the times might bring forth. He was again slow to be convinced, so earnestly does he desire

our safety. But at length he was persuaded that he himself would take the same course were he called upon to defend the religion of his fathers. He then departed, having first exacted a promise that we would soon see his new family.

Soon as Isaac was gone I sought the streets.

Rome, Fausta, has put on the appearance of the Saturnalia. Although no license of destruction has yet been publicly given, the whole city is in commotion — the lower orders noisy and turbulent, as if they had already received their commission of death. Efforts have been made, both on the part of the senate and that of the nobles who are not of that body, joined by many of all classes, to arrest the Emperor in his murderous career, but in vain. Not the Seven Hills are more firmly rooted in the earth, than he in his purposes of blood. This is well known abroad ; and the people are the more emboldened in the course they take. They know well that Aurelian is supreme and omnipotent ; that no power in Rome can come in between him and his object, whatever it may be ; and that they, therefore, though they should err through their haste, and in their zeal even go before the edicts, would find in him a lenient judge. No Christian was accordingly to be now seen in the streets — for nowhere were they safe from the ferocious language, or even the violent assaults, of the mob. These cruel executioners I found all along, wherever I moved, standing about in groups as if impatiently awaiting the hour of noon, or else gathered about the dwellings of well-known Christians, assailing the buildings with stones, and the ears of their pent-up inhabitants with all that variety of imprecation they so

well know how to use. It was almost with sensations of guilt that I walked the streets of Rome in safety, bearing a sort of charmed life, while these thousands of my friends were already suffering more through their horrible anticipation, than they would when they should come to endure the reality. But, although I passed along uninjured by actual assault, the tongue was freely let loose upon me, and promises were abundantly lavished that, before many days were gone, not even the name of Piso, nor the favor of Aurelian, should save me from the common doom.

As the hour of noon drew nigh, it seemed as if the entire population of Rome was pouring itself into the streets and avenues leading to the capitol. Not the triumph of Aurelian itself filled this people with a more absorbing, and, as it appeared, a more pleasing interest, than did the approaching calamities of the Christians. Expectation was written on every face. Even the boys threw up their caps as in anticipation of somewhat that was to add greatly to their happiness.

The sixth hour has come and is gone. The edicts are published, and the Christians are now declared enemies of the state and of the gods, and are required to be informed against by all good citizens, and arraigned before the Prefect and the other magistrates especially appointed for the purpose.

All is now confusion, uproar, and cruel violence.

No sooner was the purport of the edicts ascertained by the multitudes who on this occasion, as before,

thronged the capital, than they scattered in pursuit of their victims. The priests of the temples heading the furious crowds, they hastened from the hill in every direction, assailing, as they reached them, the houses of the Christians, and dragging the wretched inhabitants to the presence of their barbarous judges. Although in the present edicts the people are not let loose as authorized murderers upon the Christians, they are nevertheless exhorted and required to inform against them and bring them before the proper tribunals on the charge of Christianity, so that there is lodged in their hands a fearful power to harass and injure — a power which is used as you may suppose Romans would use it. Every species of violence has this day been put in practice upon this innocent people ; their perpetrators feeling sure that, in the confusion, deeds at which even Varus or Aurelian might take offence will be overlooked. The tribunals have been thronged from noon till night with Christians and their accusers. As the examination of those who have been brought up has rarely occupied but a few moments, the evidence always being sufficiently full to prove them Christians, and, when that has been wanting, their own ready confession supplying the defect — the prisons are already filling with their unhappy tenants, and extensive provisions are making to receive them in other buildings set apart for the time to this office. A needless provision. For it requires but little knowledge of Aurelian to know that his impatient temper will not long endure the tedious process of a regular accusation, trial, condemnation, and punishment. A year, in that case, would scarce suffice to make way with the Christians of Rome. Long before the prisons

can be emptied in a legal way of the tenants already crowding them, will the Emperor resort to the speedier method of a general and indiscriminate massacre. No one can doubt this, who is familiar as I am with Aurelian, and the spirits who now rule him.

Let me tell you now of the fate of Probus.

He was seated within his own quiet home at the time the edicts were proclaimed from the steps of the capitol. The moment the herald who proclaimed them had pronounced the last word, and was affixing them to the column, the name of Probus was heard shouted from one side of the hill to the other, and, while the multitude scattered in every direction in pursuit of those who were known to them severally as Christians, a large division of it made on the instant for his dwelling. On arriving there, roused by the noise of the approaching throng, Probus came forth. He was saluted by cries and yells, that seemed rather to proceed from troops of wild beasts than men. He would fain have spoken to them, but no word would they hear. 'Away with the Christian dog to the Prefect!' arose in one deafening shout from the people; and on the instant he was seized and bound, and led unresisting away to the tribunal of Varus.

As he was dragged violently along, and was now passing the door which leads to the room where Varus sits, Felix, the bishop, having already stood before the Prefect, was leaving the hall, urged along by soldiers who were bearing him to prison.

'Be of good cheer, Probus!' exclaimed he; 'a crown

awaits thee within. Rome needs thy life, and Christ thy soul.'

'Peace, dotard !' cried one of those who guarded and led him ; and at the same moment brought his spear with such force upon his head that he felled him to the pavement.

'Thou hast slain thyself, soldier, by that blow rather than him,' said Probus. 'Thine own faith has torments in reserve for such as thee.'

'Thou too !' cried the enraged soldier ; and he would have repeated the blow upon the head of the offender, but that the descending weapon was suddenly struck upwards, and out of the hand of him who wielded it, by another belonging to the same legion, who guarded Probus, saying as he did so,

'Hold, Mutius ! it is not Roman to strike the bound and defenceless, Christians though they be. Raise that fallen old man, and apply such restoratives as the place affords.' And then, with other directions to those who were subordinate to him, he moved on, bearing Probus with him.

Others who had arrived before him, were standing in the presence of Varus, who was questioning them as to their faith in Christ. On the left hand of the Prefect, and on the right of those who were examined, stood a small altar surmounted by a statue of Jupiter, to which the Christians were required to sacrifice. But few words sufficed for the examination of such as were brought up. Upon being inquired of touching their faith, there was no waiting for witnesses, but as soon as the question was put, the arraigned person acknowledged at once his name and religion. He was then re-

quired to sacrifice and renounce his faith, and forthwith he should be dismissed in safety, and with honor. This the Christian refusing steadfastly to do, sentence of death was instantly pronounced against him, and he was remanded to the prisons to await the time of punishment.

Probus was now placed before the Prefect. When it was seen throughout the crowd which again filled the house, who it was that was arraigned for examination, there were visible signs of satisfaction all around, that he, who was in a manner the ringleader of the sect, was about to meet with his deserts. As the eye of Varus fell upon Probus, and he too became aware who it was that stood at his tribunal, he bent courteously towards him, and saluted him with respect.

‘Christian,’ said he, ‘I sincerely grieve to see thee in such a pass. Ever since I met thee in the shop of the learned Publius have I conceived an esteem for thee, and would now gladly rescue thee from the danger that overhangs. Bethink thee now — thou art of too much account to die as these others. A better fate should be thine; and I will stand thy friend.’

‘Were what thou sayest true,’ replied Probus, ‘which I am slow to admit — for nobler, purer souls never lived on earth than have but now left this spot where I stand — it would but be a reason of greater force to me, why I should lose my life sooner than renounce my faith. What sacrifice can be too holy for the altar of the God whom I serve? Would to God I were more worthy than I am to be offered up.’

‘Verily,’ said Varus, ‘you are a wonderful people. The more fitted you are to live happily to yourselves,

and honorably to others, the readier you are to die. I behold in you, Probus, qualities that must make you useful here in Rome. Rome needs such as thyself. Say but the word, and thou art safe.'

'Could I in truth, Varus, possess the qualities thou imputest to me, were I ready on the moment to abandon what I have so long professed to honor and believe — abjuring, for the sake of a few years more of life, a faith which I have planted in so many other hearts, and which has already brought them into near neighborhood of a cruel death? Couldst thou thyself afterward think of me but as of a traitor and a coward?'

'I never,' said Varus, 'could do otherwise than esteem one, who, however late, at length declared himself the friend of Rome; and, more than others should I esteem him, who, from being an enemy, became a friend. Even the Emperor, Probus, desires thy safety. It is at his instance that I press thee.'

Probus bent his head and remained silent. The people, taking it as a sign of acquiescence, cried out, many of them, 'See, he will sacrifice!'

Varus too said, 'It needs not that the outward sign be made. We will dispense with it. The inward consent, Probus, shall suffice. Soldiers!—'

'Hold, hold, Varus!' cried Probus, rousing himself from a momentary forgetfulness. 'Think not, O Prefect, so meanly of me! What have I said or done to induce such belief? I was but oppressed for a moment with grief and shame that I should be chosen out from among all the Christians in Rome as one whom soft words and bribes and the hope of life could seduce from Christ. Cease, Varus, then; these words are vain.

Such as I have been, I am, and shall be to the end — a Christian !'

'To the rack with the Christian then !' shouted many voices from the crowd.

Varus enforced silence.

'Probus,' said he, as order was restored, 'I shall still hope the best for thee. Thou art of different stuff from him whom we first had before us, and leisure for reflection may bring thee to another mind. I shall not therefore condemn thee either to the rack or to death. Soldiers, bear him to the prisons at the Fabrician bridge.'

Whereupon he was led from the tribunal, and conducted by a guard to the place of his confinement.

The fate of Probus we now regard as sealed. In what manner he will finally be disposed of it is vain to conjecture, so various are the ways, each one more ingenious in cruelty than another, in which Christians are made to suffer and die. Standing as he does, as virtually the head of the Christian community, we can anticipate for him a death only of more refined barbarity.

Felix too, we learn, is confined in the same prison : and with him all the other principal Christians of Rome.

We have visited Probus in his confinement. You do not remember, Fausta, probably you never saw, the prison at the Fabrician bridge. It seems a city itself, so vast is it, and of so many parts, running upwards in

walls and towers to a dizzy height, and downwards to unknown depths, where it spreads out in dungeons never visited by the light of day. In this prison, now crowded with the Christians, did we seek our friend. We were at once, upon making known our want, shown to the cell in which he was confined.

We found him, as we entered, seated and bending over a volume which he was reading, aided by the faint light afforded by a lamp which his jailer had furnished him. He received us with cheerfulness, and at his side on the single block of stone which the cell provided for its inmates, we sat and long conversed. I expressed my astonishment that the favor of a lamp had been allowed him. 'It is not in accordance,' I said, 'with the usages of this place.'

'You will be still more amazed,' he replied, 'when I tell you through whose agency I enjoy it.'

'You must inform us,' we said, 'for we cannot guess.'

'Isaac's ;' he replied. 'At least I can think of no other to whom the description given me by the jailer corresponds. He told me upon bringing it to me, that a kind-hearted old man, a Jew, as he believed him, had made inquiry about me, and had entreated earnestly for all such privileges and favors, as the customs of the place would allow. He has even procured me the blessing of this friendly light—and what is more yet and which fills me with astonishment—has sent me this volume, which is the true light. Can it be that Isaac has done all this, who surely never has seemed to regard me with much favor.'

'Never doubt that it is he,' said Julia ; 'he has two natures, sometimes one is seen, sometimes the other—

his Jew nature, and his human nature. His human heart is soft as a woman's or a child's. One so full of the spirit of love I have never known. At times in his speech, you would think him a man bloody and severe as Aurelian himself; but in his deeds he is almost more than a Christian.'

'As the true circumcision,' said Probus, 'is that of the heart, and as he is a Jew who is one inwardly, so is he only a Christian who does the deeds of one and has the heart of one. And he who does those deeds, and has that heart—what matters it by what name he is called? Isaac is a Christian, in the only important sense of the word—and, alas! that it should be so, more than many a one who bears the name. But does this make Christ to be of none effect? Not so. The natural light, which lightens every man who cometh into the world will, here and there, in every place, and in every age, bring forth those who shall show themselves in the perfection of their virtues to be of the very lineage of Heaven—true heirs of its glory. Isaac is such a one. But what then? For one such, made by the light of nature, the gospel gives us thousands. But how is it, Piso, in the city? Are the wolves still abroad?'

'They are. The people have themselves turned informers, soldiers, and almost executioners. However large may be the proportion of the friendly or the neutral in the city, they dare not show themselves. The mob of those devoted to Aurelian constitutes now the true sovereignty of Rome—the streets are theirs—the courts are theirs—and anon the games will be theirs.'

'I am given to understand,' said Probus, 'that to-

morrow I suffer ; yet have I received from the Prefect no warning to that effect. It is the judgment of my keeper.'

'I have heard the same,' I answered, 'but I know not with what truth.'

'It can matter little to me,' he replied, 'when the hour shall come, whether to-morrow or to-night.'

'It cannot,' said Julia. 'Furnished with the whole armor of the gospel, it will be an easy thing for you to encounter death.'

'It will, lady, believe me. I have many times fought with enemies of a more fearful front. The enemies of the soul are those whom the Christian most dreads. Death is but the foe of life. So the Christian may but live to virtue and God, he can easily make his account with death. It is not the pain of dying, nor the manner of it, nor any doubts or speculations about the life to come, which, at an hour like this, intrude upon the Christian's thoughts.'

'And what then,' asked Julia, as Probus paused and fell back into himself, 'is it that fills and agitates the mind ? for at such a moment it can scarcely possess itself in perfect peace.'

'It is this,' replied Probus. 'Am I worthy ? Have I wrought well my appointed task ? Have I kept the faith ? And is God my friend and Jesus my Saviour ? These are the thoughts that engross and fill the mind. It is busy with the past—and with itself. It has no thoughts to spare upon suffering and death—it has no doubts or fears to remove concerning immortality. The future life, to me, stands out in the same certainty as the present. Death is but the moment which connects the two. You say well, that at such an hour as this the

mind can scarce possess itself in perfect peace. Yet is it agitated by nothing that resembles fear. It is the agitation that must necessarily have place in the mind of one to whom a great trust has been committed for a long series of years, at that moment when he comes to surrender it up to him from whom it was received. I have lived many years. Ten thousand opportunities of doing good to myself and others have been set before me. The world has been a wide field of action and labor, where I have been required to sow and till against the future harvest. Must I not experience solicitude about the acts and the thoughts of so long a career? I may often have erred; I must often have stood idly by the wayside; I must many times have been neglectful, and forgetful, and wilful; I must often have sinned; and it is not all the expected glory of another life, nor all the honor of dying in the cause of Christ, nor all the triumph of a martyr's fate, that can or ought to stifle and overlay such thoughts. Still I am happy. Happy, not because I am in my own view worthy or complete, but because through Jesus Christ I am taught, in God, to see a Father. I know that in him I shall find both a just and a merciful judge; and in him who was tempted even as we are, who was of our nature and exposed to our trials, shall I find an advocate and intercessor such as the soul needs. So that, if anxious as he who is human and fallible must ever be, I am nevertheless happy and contented. My voyage is ended; the ocean of life is crossed; and I stand by the shore with joyful expectations of the word that shall bid me land and enter into the haven of my rest.'

As Probus ended these words, a low and deep murmur or distant rumbling as of thunder caught our ears, which, as we listened, suddenly increased to a terrific roar of lions, as it were directly under our feet. We instinctively sprang from where we sat, but were quieted at once by Probus :

‘ There is no danger,’ said he ; ‘ they are not within our apartment, nor very near us. They are a company of Rome’s executioners, kept in subterranean dungeons, and fed with prisoners whom her mercy consigns to them. Sounds more horrid yet have met my ears, and may yours. Yet I hope not.’

But while he yet spoke, the distant shrieks of those who were thrust toward the den, into which from a high ledge they were to be plunged headlong, were borne to us, accompanied by the oaths and lashes of such as drove them, but which were immediately drowned by the louder roaring of the imprisoned beasts as they fell upon and fought for their prey. We sat mute and trembling with horror, till those sounds at length ceased to reverberate through the aisles and arches of the building.

‘ O Rome !’ cried Probus, when they had died away, ‘ how art thou drunk with blood ! Crazed by ambition, drunk with blood, drowned in sin, hardened as a millstone against all who come to thee for good, how shalt thou be redeemed ? where is the power to save thee ?’

‘ It is in thee !’ said Julia. ‘ It is thy blood, Probus, and that of these multitudes who suffer with thee, that shall have power to redeem Rome and the world. The blood of Jesus, first shed, startled the world in its slumbers of sin and death. Thine is needed now to sound another alarm, and rouse it yet once more. And

even again and again may the same sacrifice be to be offered up.'

'True, lady,' said Probus; 'it is so. And it is of that I should think. Those for whom I die should fill my thoughts, rather than any concern for my own happiness. If I might but be the instrument, by my death, of opening the eyes of this great people to their errors and their guilt, I should meet death with gratitude and joy.'

With this and such like conversation, Fausta, did we fill up a long interview with Probus. As we rose from our seats to take leave of him, not doubting that we then saw him and spoke to him for the last time, he yielded to the force of nature and wept. But this was but for a moment. Quickly restored to himself—if indeed when shedding those tears he were not more truly himself—he bade us farewell, saying with firmness and cheerfulness as he did so,

'Notwithstanding, Piso, the darkness of this hour and of all the outward prospect, it is bright within. Farewell!—to meet as I trust in Heaven!'

We returned to the Cœlian.

When I parted from Probus, at the close of this interview, it was in the belief that I should never see him more. But I was once again in his dungeon, and then heard from him what I will now repeat to you. It was thus.

Not long after we had withdrawn from his cell on our first visit, Probus, as was his wont when alone, sat reading by that dim and imperfect light which the jailer had provided him. He presently closed the volume and laid it away. While he then sat musing, and thinking of

the morrow, and of the fate which then probably awaited him, the door of his cell slowly opened. He looked, expecting to see his usual visitant the jailer, but it was a form very different from his. The door closed, and the figure advanced to where Probus sat. The gown in which it was enveloped was then let fall, and the Prefect stood before the Christian.

‘Varus!’ said Probus. ‘Do I see aright?’

‘It is Varus,’ replied the Prefect. ‘And your friend.’

‘I would, now at least, be at friendship with all the world,’ responded Probus.

‘Yet,’ said Varus, ‘your friends must be few, that you should be left in this place of horror, alone, to meet your fate.’

‘I have no friend powerful enough, on earth at least, to cope with the omnipotence of Aurelian,’ replied Probus.

‘Thy friends, Christian, are more, and more potent than thou dreamest of. As I said to thee before, even Aurelian esteems thee.’

‘Strange, that, if he esteems me, as thou sayest, he should thrust me within the lions’ den, with prospect of no escape but into their jaws. And can I suppose that his esteem is worth much to me who crowds his prisons with those who are nearest to me, reserving them there for a death the most cruel and abhorred?’

‘He may esteem thee, Probus, and not thy faith. ’Tis so with me. I like not thy faith, but truly do I say it, I like thee, and would fain serve and save thee. Nay, ’tis thy firmness and thy zeal in the cause thou hast espoused that wins me. I honor those virtues. But, Probus, in thee they are dangerous ones. The

same qualities in a worthier cause would make thee great. That which thou hast linked thyself to, Christian, is a downward and a dying one. Its doom is sealed. The word of Aurelian is gone forth, and, before the Ides, the blood of every Christian in Rome shall flow — and not in Rome only, but throughout the empire. The forces are now disposing over the whole of this vast realm, which, at a sign from the great Head, shall fall upon this miserable people, and their very name shall vanish from the earth. It is vain to contend. It is but the struggling of a man with the will and the arm of Jove —'

'Varus!—' Probus began.

'Nay,' said the Prefect, 'listen first. This faith of thine, Christian, which can thus easily be destroyed, cannot be that divine and holy thing thou deemest it. So judges Porphyrius, and all of highest mark here in Rome. It is not to be thought of one moment as possible, that what a God made known to man for truth, he should afterward leave defenceless, to be trodden to the dust, and its ministers and disciples persecuted, tormented, and exterminated by human force. Christian, thou hast been deceived — and all thy fellows are in the like delusion. Do thou then save both thyself and them. It is in thy power to stop all this effusion of blood, and restore unity and peace to an empire now torn and bleeding in every part.'

'And how, Varus — seeing thou wouldst that I should hear all — how shall it be done?'

'Embrace, Probus, the faith of Rome — the faith of thy father, venerable for piety as for years — the faith

of centuries, and of millions of our great progenitors and thou art safe, and all thine are safe.'

Probus was silent.

'Aurelian bids me say,' continued the Prefect, 'that doing this, there is not a wish of thy heart, for thyself, or for those who are dear to thee, but it shall be granted. Wealth, more than miser ever craved, office and place lower but little than Aurelian's own, shall be thine —'

'Varus ! if there is within thee the least touch of humanity, cease ! Thy words have sunk into these dead walls as far as into me ; yet have they entered far enough to have wounded the soul through and through. Not, Varus, though to all thou hast said and promised thou shouldst add Rome itself and the empire, and still to that the subject kingdoms of the East and West, with their treasures, and the world itself, would I prove false to myself, my faith, and my God. Nor canst thou think me base enough for such a deed. This is no great virtue in me, Varus. I hold it not such ; nor may you. Go through the secret chambers of these prisons with the same rich bribe upon thy tongue, and not one so fallen wouldst thou find that he would hear thee through as I have done. Varus, thou knowest not what a Christian is ! Thou canst not conceive how little a thing life is in his regard set by the side of truth. I grieve that ever I should have been so esteemed by thee as to warrant the proffers thou hast made. This injures more and deeper than these bonds, or than all thine array of engines or of beasts.'

'Be not the fool and madman,' said the Prefect, 'to cast away from thee the mercy I have brought. Except on the terms I have now named, I say there is hope

neither for thee, nor for one of this faith in Rome, however high their name or rank.'

'That can make no change in my resolve, Varus.'

'Consider, Probus, well. As by thy renunciation thou couldst save thyself, I now tell thee that the lives of those whom thou holdest nearest, hang also upon thy word. Assent to what I have offered, and Piso and Julia live ! Reject it, and they die !'

Varus paused ; but Probus spoke not. He went on.

'Christian, are not these dear to thee ? Demetrius too, and Felix ? Where are the mercies of thy boasted faith, if thy heart is left thus hard ? Truly thou mightest as well have lived and died a Pagan.'

'Again I say, Varus, thou knowest not what a Christian is. We put truth before life ; and if by but a word that should deny the truth in Christ, or any jot or tittle of it, I could save the life of Piso, Julia, Felix, Demetrius, nay, and all in Rome who hold this faith, my tongue should be torn from my mouth before that word should be spoken. And so wouldst thou find every Christian here in Rome. Why then urge me more ? Did Macer hear thee ?'

'I hold thee, Probus, a wiser man than he. All Rome knew him mad. Cast not away thy life. Live, and to-morrow's sun shall see thee First in Rome !'

'Varus ! why is this urgency ? Think me not a fool and blind. Thou knowest, and Fronto and Aurelian know, that one apostate would weigh more for your bad cause than a thousand headless trunks ; and so with cruel and insulting craft you weave your snares and pile to Heaven your golden bribes. Begone, Varus, and say to Aurelian, if in truth he sent thee on thy shameful

errand, that, in the Fabrician prison, in the same dungeon where he cast Probus the Christian, there still lives Probus the Roman, who reveres what *he* once revered and loved, truth, and whom his bribes cannot turn from his integrity.'

'Die then, idiot, in thy integrity ! Thou hast thrown scorn upon one, who has power and the will to pay it back in a coin it may little please thee to take it in. If there be one torment, Galilean, sharper than another, it shall be thine tomorrow ; and for one moment that Macer passed upon my irons, there shall be hours for thee. Not till the flesh be peeled inch by inch from thy bones, and thy vitals look through thy ribs, and thy brain boil in its hot case, and each particular nerve be stretched till it break, shall thy life be suffered to depart. Then, what the tormentors shall have left, the dogs of the streets shall devour. Now, Christian, let us see if thy God, beholding thy distress, will pity and deliver thee.'

Saying these words, his countenance transformed by passion to that of a demon, he turned and left the cell.

Never, Fausta, I feel assured, did Aurelian commission Varus with such an errand. Fallen though he be, he has not yet fallen to that lowest deep. Varus doubtless hoped to prevail over Probus by his base proposals, and by such triumph raise his fortunes yet higher with Aurelian. It was a game worth playing — so he judged, and perhaps wisely — and worth a risk. For doubtless one apostate of the rank of Probus would have been of more avail to them, as Probus said to him, than a thousand slain. For nothing do the judges so weary themselves, and exhaust their powers of persuasion, as to induce the Christians who are brought before them to re-

nounce their faith. So desirous are they of this, that they have caused, in many instances, those who were no Christians to be presented at their tribunals, who have then, after being threatened with torture and death, renounced a faith which they never professed. Once and again has this farce been acted before the Roman people. Their real triumphs of this sort have as yet been very few ; and the sensation which they produced was swallowed up and lost in the glory—in the eyes even of the strangers who are in Rome—which has crowned us in the steadfast courage with which our people have remained quietly in their homes, throughout all this dreadful preparation, and then, when the hour of trial drew nigh, and they were placed at the bar of the judge, and were accused of their religion, confessed the charge, boasted of it, and then took their way to the prison, from which, they well knew, death only would deliver them.

That, Fausta, which we have long feared and looked for, has come to pass, and Probus, our more than friend, our benefactor, and almost our parent, is, by the Emperor, condemned to death ; not, as from the words of Varus it might be supposed, to the same torments as those to which Macer was made subject ; but to be thrown to the beasts in the Flavian, a death more merciful than that, but yet full of horror. How is it that, in the Roman, mercy seems dead, and the human nature, which he received from the gods, changed to that of the most savage beast !

Livia has been with us ; and here, with us, would she now gladly remain. It is impossible, she says, for us to

conceive the height of the frenzy to which Aurelian is now wrought up against the Christians. In his impatience, he can scarce restrain himself from setting his Legions in the neighboring camp at once to the work of slaughter. But he is, strange as it may seem, in this held back and calmed by the more bloody-minded, but yet more politic, Fronto. Fronto would have the work thoroughly accomplished ; and that it may be so, he adheres to a certain system of order and apparent moderation, from which Aurelian would willingly break away and at once flood the streets of Rome in a new deluge of blood. Livia is now miserable and sad, as she was, but a few months ago, gay and happy. At the palace, she tells us, she hears no sounds but the harsh and grating voice of Fronto, or the smooth and silvery tones of Varus. As soon, she says, as Aurelian shall have departed for the East, shall she dwell either with us, or fly to the quiet retreat of Zenobia, at Tibur.

The day appointed for the death of Probus has arrived, and never did the sun shine upon a fairer one in Rome. It seems as if some high festival were come, for all Rome is afoot. Heralds parade the streets, proclaiming the death of Probus, Felix, and other Christians, in the Flavian, at the hour of noon. At the corner of every street, and at all the public places, the name of "Probus the Christian, condemned to the beasts," meets the eye. Long before the time of the sacrifice had come, the avenues leading to the theatre, and all the neighborhood of it, were crowded with the excited thousands of those who desired to witness the spectacle. There was little of beauty, wealth, fashion,

or nobility in Rome that was not represented in the dense multitude that filled the seats of the boundless amphitheatre. Probus had said to me, at my last interview with him, 'Piso, you may think it a weakness in me, but I would that one at least, whose faith is mine, and whose heart beats as mine, might be with me at the final hour. I would, at that hour, meet one eye that can return the glance of friendship. It will be a source of strength to me, and I know not how much I may need it.' I readily promised what he asked, though, as you may believe, Fausta, I would willingly have been spared the trial. So that making part of that tide pouring toward the centre, I found myself borne along at the appointed hour to the scene of suffering and death.

As I was about to pass beneath the arched-way which leads to the winding passages within, I heard myself saluted by a well-known voice, and, turning to the quarter whence it came, beheld Isaac, but without his pack, and in a costume so different from that which he usually wears, that at first I doubted the report of my eyes. But the sound of his voice, as he again addressed me, assured me it could be no other than he.

'Did I not tell thee, Piso,' said he, 'that, when the Christian was in his straits, there thou wouldst see the Jew, looking on, and taking his sport? This is for Probus the very end I looked for. And how should it be otherwise? Is he to live and prosper, who aims at the life of that to which God has given being and authority? Shall he flourish in pride and glory who hath helped to pull down what God built up? Not so, Piso. 'Tis no wonder that the Christians are now in this plight. It could be no otherwise. And in every corner

of this huge fabric wilt thou behold some of my tribe looking on upon this sight, or helping at the sacrifice. Yet, as thou knowest, I am not among them. There is no hope for Probus, Piso ?'

'None, Isaac. All Rome could not save him.'

'Truly,' rejoined the Jew, 'he is in the lion's den. Yet as the prophet Daniel was delivered, so may it be to him. God is over all.'

'God is, indeed, over all,' I said ; 'but he leaves us with our natural passions, affections, and reason, to work out our own way through the world. We are the better for it.'

'Doubtless,' said Isaac. 'Yet at times, when we look not for it, and from a quarter we dream not of, deliverance comes. So was it to Abraham, when he thought that by his own hand Isaac his son must be slain. But why to a Christian should I speak of these ? Dost thou witness the sacrifice, Piso ?'

'Yes, at the earnest entreaty of Probus himself.'

'I, too, shall be there. We shall both then see what shall come to pass.'

So saying, he moved away toward the lower vaults, where are the cages of the beasts, and I passed on and ascended the flight of steps leading to that part of the interior where it is the custom of Aurelian to sit. The Emperor was not as yet arrived, but the amphitheatre, in every part of it, was already filled with its countless thousands. All were seated idly conversing, or gazing about as at the ordinary sports of the place. The hum of so many voices struck the ear like the distant roar of the ocean. How few of those thousands — not one perhaps — knew for what it was that Probus and his com-

panions were now about to suffer a most cruel and abhorred death ! They knew that their name was Christian, and that Christian was of the same meaning as enemy of the gods and of the empire ; but what it was which made the Christian so willing to die, why it was he was so ready to come to that place of horror and give up his body to the beasts—this they knew not. It was to them a riddle they could not read. And they sat and looked on with the same vacant unconcern, or with the same expectation of pleasure, as if they were to witness the destruction of murderers and assassins. This would not have been so, had that class of the citizens of Rome, or any of them, been present, who, regarding us with favor, and hoping that somewhat might yet come of our religion advantageous to the world, maintain a neutral position. These were not there ; owing, both to their disinclination to witness scenes so brutalizing, and to apprehensions lest they should be betrayed into words or acts of sympathy, that might lead to their being confounded with the obnoxious tribe, and exposed to the like dangers. All, therefore, within the embrace of those wide-spreading walls were of one heart and one mind.

While I sat waiting the coming of the Emperor, and surrounded by those whom I knew not nor had ever seen, one who occupied a part of the same seat, accompanied by his wife and daughters, said to me,

‘ ’Tis to be hoped, sir, that so terrible an example as this will have its effect in deterring others from joining this dangerous superstition ; and not only that, but strike so wholesome a terror into those who already profess it, that they shall at once abandon it, and so the general

massacre of them not be necessary ; which, indeed, I should be loth to witness in the streets of Rome.'

'If you knew,' I replied, 'for what it is these people are condemned to such sufferings, you would not, I am sure, express yourself in that manner. You know, I may presume, only what common report has brought to your ears.'

'Nothing else, I admit,' he replied, 'My affairs confine me from morning till night. I am a secretary, sir, in the office of the public mint. I have no time to inform myself of the exact truth of any thing but columns of figures. I am not afraid to say there is not a better accountant within the walls of Rome. But as for other things, especially as to the truth in matters of this sort, I know nothing, and can learn nothing. I follow on as the world leads.'

'I dare say,' I replied, 'you have spoken the truth. And every one here present, were he to speak, would make very much the same declaration. So here are eighty thousand citizens of Rome assembled to witness the destruction of men, of whose crime they know nothing, yet rejoicing in their death as if they were murderers or robbers ! Were you charged with a false enumeration of your columns, would not you hold it basest injustice to suffer punishment before pains were taken to learn the exact truth in the case ? But are you not acting the same unjust and cruel part — with all who are here — in looking on and approving the destruction of these men, about whose offence you know nothing, and have taken no pains to inquire ?'

'By the gods !' exclaimed his wife, who seemed the sharper spirit of the two, 'I believe we have a Christian

here ! But however that may be, we should be prettily set to work, whenever some entertainment is in prospect, to puzzle ourselves about the right and the wrong in the matter. If we are to believe you, sir, whenever a poor wretch is to be thrown to the beasts, before we can be in at the sport we must settle the question — under the law I suppose — whether the condemnation be just or not ! Ha ! ha ! Our life were in that case most light and agreeable ! The Prefect himself would not have before him a more engaging task. Gods ! Cornelia dear, see what a pair of eyes !

‘ Where, mother ? ’

‘ There ! in that old man’s head. They burn and twinkle like coals of fire. I should think he must be a Christian.’

I was not sorry that a new object had attracted the attention of this lady of the secretary ; and looking where she pointed, I saw Isaac planted below us and near the arena. At the same moment the long peal of trumpets, and the shouts of the people without, gave note of the approach and entrance of the Emperor. In a moment more, with his swift step, he entered the amphitheatre, and strode to the place set apart for him, the whole multitude rising and saluting him with a burst of welcome that might have been heard beyond the walls of Rome. The Emperor acknowledged the salutation by rising from his seat and lifting the crown from his head. He was instantly seated again, and at a sign from him the herald made proclamation of the entertainments which were to follow. He who was named as the first to suffer was Probus.

When I heard his name pronounced, with the punish-

ment which awaited him, my resolution to remain forsook me, and I turned to rush from the theatre. But my recollection of Probus's earnest entreaties that I would be there, restrained me and I returned to my seat. I considered, that as I would attend the dying bed of a friend, so I was clearly bound to remain where I was, and wait for the last moments of this my more than Christian friend ; and the circumstance that his death was to be shocking and harrowing to the friendly heart was not enough to absolve me from the heavy obligation. I therefore kept my place, and awaited with patience the event.

I had waited not long when, from beneath that extremity of the theatre where I was sitting, Probus was led forth and conducted to the centre of the arena, where was a short pillar to which it was customary to bind the sufferers. Probus, as he entered, seemed rather like one who came to witness what was there than to be himself the victim, so free was his step, so erect his form. In his face there might indeed be seen an expression, that could only dwell on the countenance of one whose spirit was already gone beyond the earth, and holding converse with things unseen. There is always much of this in the serene, uplifted face of this remarkable man ; but it was now there written in lines so bold and deep, that there could have been few in that vast assembly but must have been impressed by it, as never before by aught human. It must have been this, which brought so deep a silence upon that great multitude—not the mere fact that an individual was about to be torn by lions—that is an almost daily pastime. For it was so, that when he first made his appearance, and,

as he moved toward the centre, turned and looked round upon the crowded seats rising to the heavens, the people neither moved nor spoke, but kept their eyes fastened upon him as by some spell which they could not break.

When he had reached the pillar, and he who had conducted him was about to bind him to it, it was plain, by what at that distance we could observe, that Probus was entreating him to desist and leave him at liberty ; in which he at length succeeded, for that person returned, leaving him alone and unbound. O sight of misery ! — he who for the humblest there present would have performed any office of love, by which the least good should redound to them, left alone and defenceless, they looking on and scarcely pitying his cruel fate !

When now he had stood there not many minutes, one of the doors of the vivaria was suddenly thrown back, and bounding forth with a roar, that seemed to shake the walls of the theatre, a lion of huge dimensions leaped upon the arena. Majesty and power were inscribed upon his lordly limbs ; and as he stood there where he had first sprung, and looked round upon the multitude, how did his gentle eye and noble carriage, with which no one for a moment could associate meanness, or cruelty, or revenge, cast shame upon the human monsters assembled to behold a solitary, unarmed man torn limb from limb ! When he had in this way looked upon that cloud of faces, he then turned and moved round the arena through its whole circumference, still looking upwards upon those who filled the seats — not till he had come again to the point from which he started, so much as noticing him who stood, his victim, in the midst.

Then — as if apparently for the first time becoming conscious of his presence — he caught the form of Probus ; and moving slowly towards him, looked steadfastly upon him, receiving in return the settled gaze of the Christian. Standing there, still, awhile — each looking upon the other. — he then walked round him, then approached nearer, making, suddenly and for a moment, those motions which indicate the roused appetite ; but as it were in the spirit of self-rebuke, he immediately retreated a few paces and lay down in the sand, stretching out his head toward Probus, and closing his eyes as if for sleep.

The people, who had watched in silence, and with the interest of those who wait for their entertainment, were both amazed and vexed, at what now appeared to be the dulness and stupidity of the beast. When however he moved not from his place, but seemed as if he were indeed about to fall into a quiet sleep, those who occupied the lower seats began both to cry out to him and shake at him their caps, and toss about their arms in the hope to rouse him. But it was all in vain ; and at the command of the Emperor he was driven back to his den.

Again a door of the vivaria was thrown open, and another of equal size, but of a more alert and rapid step, broke forth, and, as if delighted with his sudden liberty and the ample range, coursed round and round the arena, wholly regardless both of the people and of Probus, intent only as it seemed upon his own amusement. And when at length he discovered Probus standing in his place, it was but to bound toward him as in frolic, and then wheel away in pursuit of a pleasure he esteemed more highly than the satisfying of his hunger.

At this, the people were not a little astonished, and many who were near me hesitated not to say, "that there might be some design of the gods in this." Others said plainly, but not with raised voices, "An omen! an omen!" At the same time Isaac turned and looked at me with an expression of countenance which I could not interpret. Aurelian meanwhile exhibited many signs of impatience; and when it was evident the animal could not be wrought up, either by the cries of the people, or of the keepers, to any act of violence, he too was taken away. But when a third had been let loose, and with no better effect, nay, with less — for he, when he had at length approached Probus, fawned upon him, and laid himself at his feet — the people, superstitious as you know beyond any others, now cried out aloud, "An omen! an omen!" and made the sign that Probus should be spared and removed.

Aurelian himself seemed almost of the same mind, and I can hardly doubt would have ordered him to be released, but that Fronto at that moment approached him, and by a few of those words, which, coming from him, are received by Aurelian as messages from Heaven, put within him a new and different mind; for rising quickly from his seat he ordered the keeper of the vivaria to be brought before him. When he appeared below upon the sands, Aurelian cried out to him,

'Why, knave, dost thou weary out our patience thus — letting forth beasts already over-fed? Do thus again, and thou thyself shalt be thrown to them. Art thou too a Christian?'

'Great Emperor,' replied the keeper, 'than those I have now let loose, there are not larger nor fiercer in

the imperial dens, and since the sixth hour of yesterday they have tasted nor food nor drink. Why they have thus put off their nature 'tis hard to guess, unless the general cry be taken for the truth, "that the gods have touched them."

Aurelian was again seen to waver, when a voice from the benches cried out,

'It is, O Emperor, but another Christian device! Forget not the voice from the temple! The Christians, who claim powers over demons, bidding them go and come at pleasure, may well be thought capable to change, by the magic imputed to them, the nature of a beast.'

'I doubt not,' said the Emperor, 'but it is so. Slave! throw up now the doors of all thy vaults, and let us see whether both lions and tigers be not too much for this new necromancy. If it be the gods who interpose, they can shut the mouths of thousands as of one.'

At those cruel words, the doors of the vivaria were at once flung open, and an hundred of their fierce tenants, maddened both by hunger and the goads that had been applied, rushed forth, and in the fury with which in a single mass they fell upon Probus—then kneeling upon the sands—and burying him beneath them, no one could behold his fate, nor, when that dark troop separated and ran howling about the arena in search of other victims, could the eye discover the least vestige of that holy man. — I then fled from the theatre as one who flies from that which is worse than death.

Felix was next offered up, as I have learned, and after him more than fourscore of the Christians of Rome.

Rome continues the same scene of violence, cruelty, and blood. Each moment are the miserable Christians dragged through the streets either to the tribunals of the judges, or thence, having received their doom, to the prisons.

Seeing, Fausta, that the Emperor is resolved that we shall not be among the sufferers, and that he is also resolved upon the total destruction of all within the walls of Rome, from which purpose no human power can now divert him, we feel ourselves no longer bound to this spot, and are determined to withdraw from it, either to Tibur or else to you. Were there any office of protection or humanity, which it were in our power to perform toward the accused or the condemned, you may believe that we should remain fixed to the post of duty. But the fearful sweep which is making, and yet to be made, of every living soul in Rome, leaves nothing for us to do but to stand idle and horror-struck witnesses of sufferings and wrongs, which we can do nothing to avert or relieve. Portia shares our sorrows, and earnestly entreats us to depart, consenting herself to accompany us.

After seeing Zenobia at Tibur, and conversing with her and Livia, whom I found there, we have resolved upon Palmyra, and already have I engaged a vessel bound to Berytus. A brief interval will alone be needful for our preparations. Portia goes with us.

In the midst of these preparations, news is brought us by Milo that Aurelian, hastened by accounts of disturbances in the army, has suddenly started for Thrace.

But I see not that this can interfere with our movements, unless indeed.....What can mean this sudden uproar in the streets ?—and now within the house itself.....My fears are true.....

Fausta, I am a prisoner in the hands of Fronto. I now write in chains, and Julia stands at my side bound also. I have obtained with difficulty this grace, to seal my letter, and bid you farewell.

THUS were Piso and Julia at length in the grasp of the cruel and relentless Fronto. Aurelian's sudden departure from Rome placed the whole conduct of the enterprise he had undertaken in the hands of Varus and the priest, who were left by the Emperor with full powers to carry on and complete the work which he had begun. It was his purpose however, so soon as the difficulties in the army should be composed, himself immediately to return, and remain till the task were ended — the great duty done. But, as many causes might conspire to prevent this, they were clothed with sovereign authority to do all that the welfare of the city and the defence and security of religion might require. I will not charge Aurelian with an unnecessary absence at this juncture, that so he might turn over to his tools a work, at which his own humanity and conscience, hardened as they were, revolted—or rather that they, voluntarily, and

moved only by their own superstitious and malignant minds might then be free to do what they might feel safe in believing would be an acceptable service to their great master. I will still believe, that, had he intended the destruction of Piso and Julia, he would, with that courage which is natural to him, have fearlessly and unshrinkingly done the deed himself. I will rather suppose that his ministers, without warrant from him, and prompted by their own hate alone, ventured upon that dark attempt, trusting, when it should have once been accomplished, easily to obtain the pardon of him, who, however he might affect or feel displeasure for a moment, would secretly applaud and thank them for the deed.

However this may be, Aurelian suddenly departed from Rome, and Fronto and Varus filled his place ; and their first act of authority was the seizure of Piso and the Princess. At Tibur we knew nothing of these events till they were passed ; we caring not to hear of the daily horrors that were acted in the city, and feeling as secure of the safety of Piso and Julia as of our own.

It was on a gloomy winter evening when they were borne away from their home upon the Cælian to the dark vaults beneath the Temple of the Sun, Fronto's own province. But here again let Piso speak for himself, as I find recorded in the fragment of a letter.

* * * The darkness of the night scarce permitted me to see, he says, whither we were borne, but when the guard stopped and required us to alight from the carriage in which we had been placed, I perceived that we were at the steps of the temple — victims therefore in his own regions of a man, as much more savage

than Aurelian, as he than a beast of the forest. We were denied the happiness of being confined in the same place, but were thrust into separate dungeons, divided by walls of solid rock. Here, when wearied out by watching, I fell asleep. How long this lasted I cannot tell ; I was wakened by the withdrawing of the bolts of my door. One, bearing a dim light, slowly opening the door, entered. Forgetting my condition I essayed to rise, but my heavy chains bound me to the floor. Soon as the noise of my motion caught the ear of the person who had entered, he said,

‘ So ; all is safe. I am not thy keeper, sir Piso, but ’tis my province to keep the keeper — that is — visit thee every hour to see that thou art here. Yet, by the gods ! if you Christians have that power of magic, which is commonly reported of you, I see not of what use it were to watch you thus. How is it with thee, most noble Piso ?’

‘ That is of little moment ; but tell me, if there is anything human in thee, where is the Princess Julia, and what is her fate ?’

‘ Be not too much concerned,’ he replied. ‘ She is safe, I warrant you. None but Fronto deals with her.’

‘ Fronto !’ I could only say.

‘ Yes, Fronto. Fear not, he is an honorable man and a holy priest.’

‘ Fronto !’ I was about to add more, but held my peace ; knowing well that what I might say could avail nothing for us, and might be turned against us. I only asked, ‘ why there was such delay in examining and condemning us ?’

‘ That is a question truly,’ he replied ; ‘ but not so

easy to be answered. Few know the reason, that I can say. But what is there in the heart of Fronto that is kept from Curio ? Are thy chains easy, Piso ?

‘ I would that they might be lengthened. Here am I bound to the floor without so much as the power to stand upright. This is useless suffering.’

‘ ’Twas so ordered by Fronto ; but then if there is one in Rome who can take a liberty with him, I know well who he is. So hold thou the lamp, Piso, and I will ease thee ;’ and, like one accustomed to the art, he soon struck apart the chain, and again uniting it left me room both to stand and move.

‘ There,’ said he, as he took again the lamp, ‘ for one who hates a Christian as he does death, that’s a merciful deed. But I can tell thee one thing, that it will not ease thee long.’

‘ That I can believe. But why, once more, is there this delay ?’

‘ I know not, Piso, whether I should tell thee, but as I doubt not Fronto would, were he here, I surely may do the same, for if there are two men in Rome, Piso, whose humors are the same and jump together, I and Fronto are they. There is a dispute then, noble Piso, between Varus and Fronto about the lady Julia —’ and without heeding my cries the wretch turned and left the vault, closing after him the heavy door.

How many days, in the torture of a suspense and ignorance worse than death, I lay here, I cannot tell. Curio came as often as he said to see that all was safe, but there was little said by either ; he would examine my chain and then depart. On the night—the last night I

passed in that agony — preceding my examination by Varus and Fronto, I was disturbed from my slumbers by the entrance of Curio. He advanced with as it seemed to me an unusually cautious step, and I rose expecting some communication of an uncommon nature. But what was my amazement, as the light fell upon the face of him who bore it, to see not Curio but Isaac. His finger was on his lips, while in his hand he held the implements necessary for sawing apart my chains.

‘Piso!’ said he in a whispered tone, ‘thou art now free, — I could not save Probus, but I can save thee — horses fleet as the winds await thee and the Princess beyond the walls, and at the Tiber’s mouth a vessel takes you to Berytus. Curio lies drunk or dead, it matters little which, in a neighboring vault.’ And he set down the lamp and seized my chain. The strange devotion of this man moved me ; and, were it but to reward his love, I could almost have slipped my bonds. But other thoughts prevailed.

‘Isaac, you have risked your life and that of your household in this attempt ; and sorry am I that I can pay thee only with my thanks. I cannot fly.’

‘Piso ! thou surely art not mad ? Why shouldst thou stay in the hands of these pagan butchers—’

‘Were this, Isaac, but the private rage of Fronto, gladly would I go with thee — more gladly would I give Julia to thy care. But it is not so. It is, as thou knowest, for our faith that we are here and thus ; and shall we shrink from what Probus bore ?’

‘Piso, believe me — ’tis not for thy faith alone that thou art here, but for thy riches, and thy wife—’

‘Isaac ! thou hast been deceived. Sooner would they

throw themselves into a lion's den for sport, than brave the wrath of Aurelian for such a crime. Thou hast been deceived.'

'I have it,' replied the Jew, 'from the mouth of the miscreant Curio, who has told me of fierce disputes, overheard by him, between Varus and Fronto concerning the lady Julia.'

'Their dispute has been, doubtless, whether she too should be destroyed; for to Fronto is well known the constant love which Aurelian still bears her. Curio is not always right.'

'And is this my answer, Piso?' said Isaac. 'And, if I cannot prevail with thee, shall I not still see thy wife? Over her perchance—'

'No, Isaac; it would be of no avail. Her answer would be the same as mine.'

'Nevertheless, Piso, I believe that what I have heard and surmised is so. Fronto and Varus, who have played with the great Aurelian as a toyman with his images, may carry even this.'

'Were it so, I put my trust in God, and to him commend myself and Julia. For this our faith are we ready to bear all that man can devise or do.'

Seeing that further argument was vain, Isaac, with eyes that overflowed as any woman's, embraced me and left the cell.

On the day which followed the visit of Isaac was I placed before Fronto and Varus.

It was in the great room of the temple that the Prefect and the Priest awaited their victims. It was dimly illuminated, so that the remoter parts were lost in thick

darkness. So far as the eye could penetrate it, a crowd of faces could be discerned in the gloom, of those who were there to witness the scene. All, whom my sight could separate from the darkness, were of the Roman priesthood, or friends of Fronto. Not that others were excluded — it was broad day, and the act was a public one, and authorized by the imperial edict — but that no announcement of it had been made ; and by previous concert the place had been filled with the priests and subordinate ministers of the Roman temples. I knew therefore that not a friendly eye or arm was there. Whatever it might please those cruel judges to inflict upon myself or Julia, — there was none to remonstrate or interpose. With what emotions, when I had first been placed before those judges, did I await the coming of Julia, from whom I had now been so long parted ! Fervently did I pray that the mercy of Fronto would first doom her, that she might be sure of at least one sympathising and pitying heart.

On the right of the Prefect, upon a raised platform, were set the various instruments of torture and death, each attended by its half naked minister.

I had not stood long, when upon the other side of the room the noise of the dividing crowd told me that Julia was entering, and in a moment more she was standing at a little distance from me, and opposite Fronto — I being opposite the Prefect. Our eyes met once — and no more. As I could have desired, Fronto first addressed her.

‘ Woman ! thou standest here charged with impiety, and denial of the gods of Rome ; in other words, with being a follower of Christ the Nazarene. That the

charge is true, witnesses stand here ready to affirm. Dost thou deny the charge? Then will we prove its truth.'

'I deny it not,' responded Julia, 'but confess it. Witnesses are not needed. The Christian witnesses for himself.'

'Dost thou know the penalty that waits on such confession?'

'I know it, but do not fear it.'

'But for thee to die so, woman, is of ill example to all in Rome. We would rather change thee. We would not have thee die the enemy of the gods, of Rome, and of thyself. I ask thee then to renounce thy vain impiety!'

Julia answered not.

'I require thee, Christian, to renounce Christ!'

Still Julia made no reply.

'Know you not, woman, I have power to force from thee that, which thou wilt not say willingly?'

'Thou hast no such power, Priest. Thou wert else God.'

'Thy tender frame cannot endure the torture of those engines. It were better spared such suffering.'

'I would gladly be spared that suffering,' said Julia; 'but not at the expense of truth.'

'Think not that I will relent. Those irons shall rack and rend thee in every bone and joint, except thou dost renounce that foul impostor, whose curse now lies heavy upon Rome and the world.'

'Weary me not, Priest, with vain importunity. I am a Christian, and a Christian will I die.'

‘Prepare then the rack!’ cried Fronto, his passions rising; ‘that is the medicine for obstinacy such as this. Now bind her to it.’

Hearing that, I wildly exclaimed,

‘Priest! thou dar’st not do it for thy life! Touch but the hair of her head, and thy life shall answer it. Aurelian’s word is pledged, and thou dar’st not break it.’

‘Aurelian is far enough from here,’ replied the priest. ‘But were he where I am, thou wouldst see the same game. I am Aurelian now.’

‘Is this then thy commission, had from Aurelian?’

‘That matters not, young Piso. ’Tis enough for thee to know that Fronto rules in Rome. No more! Hold now thy peace! Where an Empress has sued in vain, there is no room for words from thee. Slaves! bind her, I say! To the rack with her!’

At that I sprang madly forward, thinking only of her rescue from those murderous fangs, but was at the same instant drawn violently back both by my chains and the arms of those who guarded me. The tormentors descended from their engines to fulfil the commands of Fronto, and, laying hold of Julia, bore her, without an opposing word, or look, or motion, toward their instruments of death. And they were already binding her limbs to the accursed wheels, while Fronto and Varus both drew nigh to gloat over her agonies, when a distant sound, as of the ocean lashed by winds, broke upon the ears of all within that hell. Even the tormentors paused in their work, and looked at each other and at Fronto, as if asking what it should mean.

The silence of death fell upon the crowd — every ear strained to catch the still growing sound and interpret it.

‘ ’Tis but the winter wind ! ’ cried Fronto. ‘ On, cowards, with your work ! ’

But, ere the words had left his lips, or those demons could wind the wheels of their engine, the appalling tumult of a multitude rushing toward the temple became too fearfully distinct for even Fronto or Varus to pretend to doubt its meaning. But why it was, or for what, none could guess ; only upon the terror-struck forms of both the Prefect and the Priest might be read apprehensions of hostility that from some quarter was aiming at themselves. Fronto’s voice was again heard :

‘ Bar the great doors of the temple ! let not the work of the gods be profanely violated. ’

But the words were too late ; for, while he was yet speaking, O Fausta, how shall I paint my agony of joy ! there was heard from the street and from the porch of the temple itself the shouts of as it were ten thousand voices,

“ Tacitus is Emperor ! ” “ Long live the good Tacitus ! ”

Freedom and life were in those cries. The crowds from the streets swept in at the doors like an advancing torrent. Varus and Fronto, followed by their myrmidons, vanished through secret doors in the walls behind them, and among the first to greet me and strike the chains from my limbs were Isaac and Demetrius.

‘ And where is the lady Julia ? ’ cried Isaac.

‘ There ! ’

He flew to the platform, and, turning back the wheels, Julia was once more in my arms.

‘ And now, ’ I cried, ‘ what means it all ? Am I awake, or do I dream ? ’

‘ You are awake,’ replied Demetrius. ‘ The tyrant is dead ! and the senate and people all cry out for Tacitus.’

I now looked about me. The mob of priests was fled, and around me I beheld a thousand well-known faces of those who already had been released from their dungeons. Christians, and the friends of Christians, now filled the temple.

‘ We were led hither,’ continued Demetrius, ‘ by your fast friend and the friend I believe of all, Isaac. None but he, and those to whom he gave the tidings, knew where the place of your confinement was ; nor was the day of your trial publicly proclaimed, although we found the temple open. But for him we should have been, I fear, too late. But no sooner was the news of Aurelian’s assassination spread through the city, than Isaac roused your friends and led the way.’

As Demetrius ceased, the name of “ Tacitus Emperor,” resounded again throughout the temple, and the crowds then making for the streets, about which they careered mad with joy, we were at liberty to depart ; and accompanied by Isaac and Demetrius, were soon beneath our own roof upon the Cœlian.

With what joy then, in our accustomed place of prayer, did we pour forth our thanksgivings to the Overruling Providence, who had not only rescued ourselves from the very jaws of death, but had wrought out this great deliverance of his whole people ! Never before, Fausta, was Christianity in such peril ; never was there a man, who, like Aurelian, united to a native cruelty that could behold the shedding of blood with the same indifference as the flowing of water, a zeal for the gods

and a love of country that amounted quite to a superstitious madness. Had not death interposed — judging as man — no power could have stayed that arm that was sweeping us from the face of the earth.

The prisons have all been thrown open, and their multitudes again returned to their homes. The streets and squares of the capital resound with the joyful acclamations of the people. Our churches are once more unbarred, and with the voice of music and of prayer, our people testify before Heaven their gratitude for this infinite mercy.

The suddenness of this transition, from utter hopelessness and blank despair to this fulness of peace, and these transports of joy, is almost too much for the frame to bear. Tears and smiles are upon every face. We know not whether to weep or laugh ; and many, as if their reason were gone, both laugh and cry, utter prayers and jests in the same breath.

Soon as we found ourselves quietly in possession again of our own home, surrounded by our own household, Portia sitting with us and sharing our felicity, the same feeling impelled us at once to seek Livia and Zenobia. The Empress was, as we had already learned, at Tibur, whither she had but this morning fled, upon finding all interference of no avail, hoping — but how vainly — that possibly her mother, than whose name in Rome none was greater, save Aurelian's — might prevail, where the words had fallen but upon deaf ears and stony hearts. Our chariot bore us quickly beyond the walls, and toward the palace of the Queen. As we reached the entrance, Zenobia at the same moment, ac-

accompanied by Livia, Nicomachus, and her usual train, was mounting her horse for Rome. Our meeting I need not describe. That day and evening were consecrated to love and friendship; and many days did we pass there in the midst of satisfactions of double worth, I suppose, from the brief interval which separated them from the agonies which but so lately we had endured.

All that we have as yet learned of Aurelian is this, that he has met the fate that has waited upon so many of the masters of the world. His own soldiers have revenged themselves upon him. Going forth, as it is reported, to quell a sudden disturbance in the camp, he was set upon by a band of desperate men — made so by threats of punishment which he ever keeps — and felt pierced by a hundred swords. When more exact accounts arrive, you shall hear again.

Tacitus, who has long been the idol of the Senate, and of the best part of the people of Rome, famed, as you know, for his wisdom and his mild virtues, distinguished too for his immense wealth and the elegance of his tastes, was at once, on the news of Aurelian's death, proclaimed Emperor; not so much, however, by any formal act of the Senate, as by the unanimous will of all — senators and people. For, in order that the chance of peace may be the greater, the Senate, before any formal and public decree shall be passed, will wait the pleasure of the army. But, in the meantime, he is as truly Emperor as was Aurelian — and was, indeed, at the first moment the news of the assassination arrived. His opinions concerning the Christians also, being well known, the proclamation of his name as Augustus, was at the same time one of safety and deliverance to our

whole community. No name in Rome could have struck such terror into the hearts of Varus and Fronto, as that of Tacitus — " Tacitus Emperor !"

After our happy sojourn at Tibur, and we had once more regained our home upon the Cœlian, we were not long, as you may believe, in seeking the street Janus, and the dwelling of Isaac. He was happily within, and greeted us with heartiest welcome.

' Welcome, most noble Piso,' he cried, ' to the street Janus !'

' And,' I added, ' to the house of a poverty-pinched Jew ! This resembles it indeed !'

' Ah ! are you there, Piso ? Well, well, if I have seemed poor, thou knowest why it has been, and for what. Welcome too, Princess ! enter, I pray you, and when you shall be seated I shall at once show you what you have come to see, I doubt not — my assortment of diamonds. Ah ! the news of your arrival has spread, and they are before me — here, Piso, is the woman of the desert, and the young Ishmael, and here, lady, are two dark-eyed nymphs of Ecbatana. Children, this is the beautiful Princess of Palmyra, whose name you have heard more than once.'

It was a pretty little circle, Fausta, as the eye need behold ; and gathered together here by how strange circumstances ! The very sun of peace and joy seemed breaking from the countenance of Isaac. He caressed first one and then another, nor did he know how to leave off kissing and praising them.

When we had thus sat, and made ourselves known all around to each other, Julia said to Isaac, ' that she should hope often to see him and them in the same

way ; but however often it might be, and at whatever other times, she begged, that annually, on the Ides of January, she with Piso might be admitted to his house and board, to keep with them all a feast of grateful recollection. Whatever it is that makes the present hour so happy to us all, we owe, Isaac, to you.'

'Lady! to the providence of the God of Abraham!'

'In you, Isaac, I behold his providence.'

'Lady, it shall be as you say — on the Ides of January, will we, as the years go round, call up to our minds these dark and bloody times, and give thanks for the great redemption. Were Probus but with you, and to be with you, Piso, your cup were full. And he had been here, but for the voice of one, who, just as the third lion had been uncaged, fixed again the wavering mind of Aurelian, who then, madman-like, set on him that forest-full of beasts. At that moment, I found it, Piso, discreetest to depart.'

'And was your hand in that too, Isaac? Were those lions of your training? and that knave's lies of your telling?'

'Verily thou mayest say so.'

'But was that the part of a Jew?'

'No,' said Julia, 'it was only the part of Isaac.'

'Probus,' said Isaac, 'was the friend of Piso and Julia, and therefore he was mine. If now you ask how I love you so, I can only say, I do not know. We are riddles to ourselves. When I first saw thee, Piso, I fancied thee, and the fancy hath held till now. Now, where love is, there is power—high as heaven, deep as hell. Where there is the will, the arm is strong and the wits clear. Mountains of difficulty and seas of danger sink into

mole-hills and shallow pools. Besides, Piso, there is no virtue in Rome but gold will buy it, and, as thou knowest, in that I am not wanting. Any slave like Curio, or he of the Flavian, may be had for a basket-full of oboli. With these two clues, thou canst thread the labyrinth.'

Though our affairs, Fausta, now put on so smiling a face, we do not relinquish the thought of visiting you ; and with the earliest relenting of the winter, so that a Mediterranean voyage will be both safe and pleasant, shall we turn our steps toward Palmyra.

Demetrius greatly misses his brother, But what he has lost, you have gained.

What at this moment is the great wonder in Rome is this—a letter has come from the Legions in Thrace in terms most dutiful and respectful toward the Senate, deploring the death of Aurelian, and desiring that they will place him in the number of the gods, and appoint his successor. This is all that was wanted to confirm us in our peace. Now we may indeed hail Tacitus as Augustus and Emperor. Farewell.

Piso has mentioned with brevity the death of Aurelian, and the manner of it as first received at Rome. I will here add to it the account which soon became current in the capital, and which to this time remains without contradiction.

Already has the name of Menestheus occurred in these memoirs. He was one of the secretaries of the Emperor, always near him and much in his confidence. This seemed strange to those who knew both, for Menestheus did not possess those qualities which Aurelian esteemed. He was selfish, covetous, and fawning ; his spirit and manner those of a slave to such as were above him—those of a tyrant to such as were below him. His affection for the Emperor, of which he made great display, was only for what it would bring to him ; and his fidelity to his duties which was exemplary, grew out of no principle of integrity, but was merely a part of that self-seeking policy that was the rule of his life. His office put him in the way to amass riches, and for that reason there was not one perhaps of all the servants of the Emperor who performed with more exactness the affairs entrusted to him. He had many times incurred the displeasure of Aurelian, and his just rebuke for acts of rapacity and extortion, by which, never the empire, but his own fortune was profited ; but, so deep and raging was his thirst of gold, that it had no other effect than to restrain for a season a passion which was destined, in its further indulgence, to destroy both master and servant.

Aurelian had scarcely arrived at the camp without the walls of Byzantium, and was engaged in the final arrangements of the army previous to the departure for Syria—oppressed and often irritated by the variety and weight of the duties which claimed his care—when, about the hour of noon, as he was sitting in his tent, he was informed, “ that one from Rome with pressing business craved to be heard of the Emperor.”

He was ordered to approach.

‘And why,’ said Aurelian, as the stranger entered, ‘have you sped in such haste from Rome to seek me?’

‘Great Cæsar, I have come for justice!’

‘Is not justice well administered in the courts of Rome, that thou must pursue me here, even to the gates of Byzantium?’

‘None can complain,’ replied the Roman, ‘that justice hath been withheld from the humblest since the reign of Aurelian —’

‘How then,’ interrupted Aurelian, ‘how is it that thou comest hither? Quick! let us know thy matter?’

‘To have held back,’ the man replied, ‘till the return of the army from its present expedition, and the law could be enforced, were to me more than ruin.’

‘What, knave, has the army to do with thee, or thou with it? Thy matter, quick, I say.’

‘Great Cæsar,’ rejoined the other, ‘I am the builder of this tent. And from my workshops came all these various furnishings, of the true and full value of all of which I have been defrauded —’

‘By whom?’

‘By one near the Emperor, Menestheus the noble secretary.’

‘Menestheus! Make out the case, and, by the great god of Light, he shall answer it. Be it but a farthing he hath wronged thee of, and he shall answer it. Menestheus?’

‘Yes, great Emperor, Menestheus. It was thus. When the work he spoke for was done and fairly delivered to his hands, agreeing to the value of an obolus and the measure of a hair, with the strict commands he

gave, what does he when he sees it, but fall into a rage and swear that 'tis not so — that the stuff is poor, the fashion mean and beggarly, the art slight and imperfect, and that the half of what I charged, which was five hundred aurelians, was all that I should have, with which, if I were not content and lisped but a syllable of blame, a dungeon for my home were the least I might expect; and if my knavery reached the ear of Aurelian, from which, if I hearkened to him, it should be his care to keep it, my life were of less value than a fly's. Knowing well the power of the man, I took the sum he proffered, hoping to make such composition with my creditors, that I might still pursue my trade, for, O Emperor, this was my first work, and being young and just venturing forth, I was dependent upon others. But, with the half price I was allowed to charge, and was paid, I cannot reimburse them. My name is gone and I am ruined.'

'The half of five hundred — say you — was that the sum, and all the sum he paid you?'

'It was. And there are here with me those that will attest it.'

'It needs not; for I myself know that from the treasury five hundred aurelians were drawn, and said, by him, for this work — which well suits me — to have been duly paid. Let but this be proved, and his life is the least that it shall cost him. But it must be well proved. Let us now have thy witnesses.'

Menestheus at this point, ignorant of the charge then making against him, entered the tent. Appalled by the apparition of the injured man, and grasping at a glance the truth, all power of concealment was gone, conscious

guilt was written in the color and in every line and feature of the face.

‘Menestheus!’ said Aurelian, ‘knowest thou this man?’

‘He is Virro, an artisan of Rome;’ replied the trembling slave.

‘And what think you makes him here?’

The Secretary was silent.

‘He has come, Menestheus, well stored with proofs, beside those which I can furnish, of thy guilt. Shall the witnesses be heard? Here they stand.’

Menestheus replied not. The very faculty of speech had left the miserable man.

‘How is it,’ then said Aurelian in his fiercest tones, ‘how is it that again, for these paltry gains, already rolling in wealth—thou wilt defile thy own soul, and bring public shame upon me too, and Rome! Away to thy tent! and put in order thine own affairs and mine. Thou hast lived too long. Soldiers, let him be strongly guarded.—Let Virro now receive his just dues. Men call me cruel, and well I fear they may; but unjust, rapacious, never, as I believe. Whom have I wronged, whom oppressed? The poor of Rome, at least, cannot complain of Aurelian. Is it not so, sirrah?’

‘Rome,’ he replied, ‘rejoices in the reign of Aurelian. His love of justice and of the gods, give him a place in every heart.’

Whether Aurelian would have carried into execution the threat, which in a moment of passion he had passionately uttered, none can tell. All that can be said is this, that he rarely threatened but he kept his word.

This the secretary knew, and knew therefore, that another day he might never see. His cunning and his wit now stood him in good stead. A doomed man—he was a desperate man, and no act then seemed to him a crime, by which his doom might be averted. Retiring to his tent to fulfil the commands of the Emperor, he was there left alone, the tent being guarded without ; and then as his brain labored in the invention of some device, by which he might yet escape the impending death, and save a life which — his good name being utterly blasted and gone, could have been but a prolonged shame — he conceived and hatched a plan, in its ingenuity, its wickedness, and atrocious baseness, of a piece with his whole character and life. In the handwriting of the Emperor, which he could perfectly imitate, he drew up a list of some of the chief officers of the army — by him condemned to death on the following day. This paper, as he was at about the eleventh hour led guarded to his place of imprisonment, he dropt at the tent door of one whose name was on it.

It fell into the intended hands ; and soon as the friendly night had come the bloody scroll was borne from tent to tent, stirring up to vengeance the designated victims. No suspicion of fraud ever crossed their minds ; but amazed at a thirst of blood so insatiable, and which, without cause assigned, could deliver over to the axe his best and most trusted friends, Carus, Probus, Mucapor — they doubted whether in truth his reason were not gone, and deemed it no crime, but their highest duty, to save themselves by the sacrifice of one who was no longer to be held a man.

After the noon of this day the army had made a short but quick march to Heraclea. Aurelian — the tents being pitched — the watch set — the soldiers, weary with their march, asleep — himself tired with the day's duty — sat with folded arms, having just ungirded and thrown from him his sword. His last attendant was then dismissed, who, passing from the tent door, encountered the conspirators as they rushed in, and was by them hewn to the ground. Aurelian, at that sound, sprang to his feet. But alone, with the swords of twenty of his bravest generals at his breast — and what could he do ? One fell at the first sweep of his arm ; but, ere he could recover himself — the twenty seemed to have sheathed their weapons in his body. Still he fought, but not a word did he utter till the dagger of Mucapor, raised aloft, was plunged into his breast, with the words,

‘ This Aurelia sends ! ’

‘ Mucapor ! ’ he then exclaimed as he sank to the ground, ‘ canst thou stab Aurelian ? ’ Then turning toward the others, who stood looking upon their work, he said, ‘ Why, soldiers and friends, is this ? Hold, Mucapor, leave in thy sword, lest life go too quick ; I would speak a word — ’ and he seized the wrist of Mucapor and held it even then with an iron grasp. He then added, ‘ Romans ! you have been deceived ! You are all my friends, and have ever been. Never more than now — ’ His voice fell.

Probus then reaching forward, cried out, unfolding at the same moment the bloody list,

‘ See here, tyrant ! are these thy friends ? ’

The eyes of Aurelian, waking up at those words with all the intentness of life, sought the fatal scroll and

sharply scanned it — then closing again, he at the same moment drew out the sword of Mucapor, saying as he did so,

‘Tis the hand of Menestheus — not mine. You have been deceived.’ With that he fell backwards and expired.

Those miserable men then looking upon one another — the truth flashed upon them ; and they knew that to save the life of that mean and abject spirit they there stood together murderers of the benefactor of many of them — the friend of all — of a General and Emperor whom, with all his faults, Rome would mourn as one who had crowned with a new glory her Seven Hills. How did they then accuse themselves for their unreasonable haste — their blind credulity ! How did they bewail the cruel blows which had thus deprived them of one, whom they greatly feared indeed, but whom also they greatly loved ! above all, one whom, as their master in that art which in every age has claimed the admiration of the world, they looked up to as a very god ! Some reproached themselves ; some, others ; some threw themselves upon the body of Aurelian in the wildness of their remorse and grief ; and all swore vengeance upon the miscreant who had betrayed them.

Thus perished the great Aurelian — for great he truly was, as the world has ever estimated greatness. When the news of his assassination reached Rome, the first sensation was that of escape, relief, deliverance ; with the Christians, and all who favored them, though not of their faith, it was undissembled joy. The streets presented the appearances which accompany an occasion of general rejoicing. Life seemed all at once more se-

cure. Another bloody tyrant was dead, by the violence which he had meted out to so many others, and they were glad. But with another part of the Roman people it was far otherwise. They lamented him as the greatest soldier Rome had known since Cæsar ; as the restorer of the empire ; as the stern but needful reformer of a corrupt and degenerate age ; as one who to the army had been more than another Vespasian ; who, as a prince, if sometimes severe, was always just, generous, and magnanimous. These were they, who, caring more for the dead than for the living, will remember concerning them only that which is good. They recounted his virtues and his claims to admiration—which were unquestionable and great—and forgot, as if they had never been, his deeds of cruelty, and the wide and wanton slaughter of thousands and hundreds of thousands, which will ever stamp him as one destitute of humanity, and whose almost only title to the name of man was, that he was in the shape of one. For how can the possession of a few of those captivating qualities, which so commonly accompany the possession of great power, atone for the rivers of blood which flowed wherever he wound his way ?


I have now ended what I proposed to myself. I have arranged and connected some of the letters of Lucius Manlius Piso, having selected chiefly those which related to the affairs of the Christians and their sufferings during the last days of Aurelian's reign. Those days were happily few. And when they were passed, I deemed that never again, so fast did the world appear to grow wiser and better, could the same horrors be repeated

AURELIAN.

ut it was not so ; and under Diocletian I beheld that work in a manner perfected, which Aurelian did but begin. I have outlived the horrors of those times, and at length, under the powerful protection of the great Constantine, behold this much-persecuted faith secure. In this I sincerely rejoice, for it is Christianity alone, of all the religions of the world, to which may be safely intrusted the destinies of mankind.

END.

A
C A T A L O G U E
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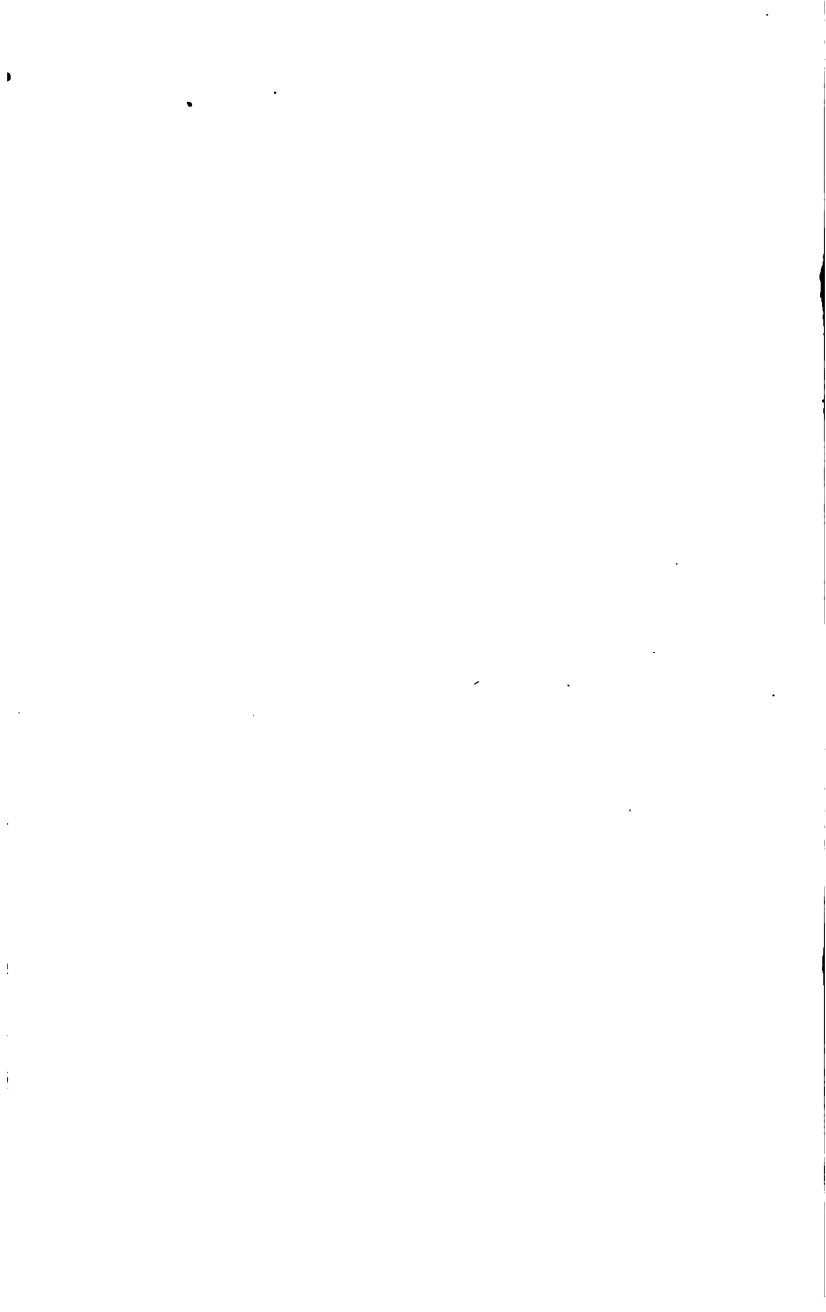
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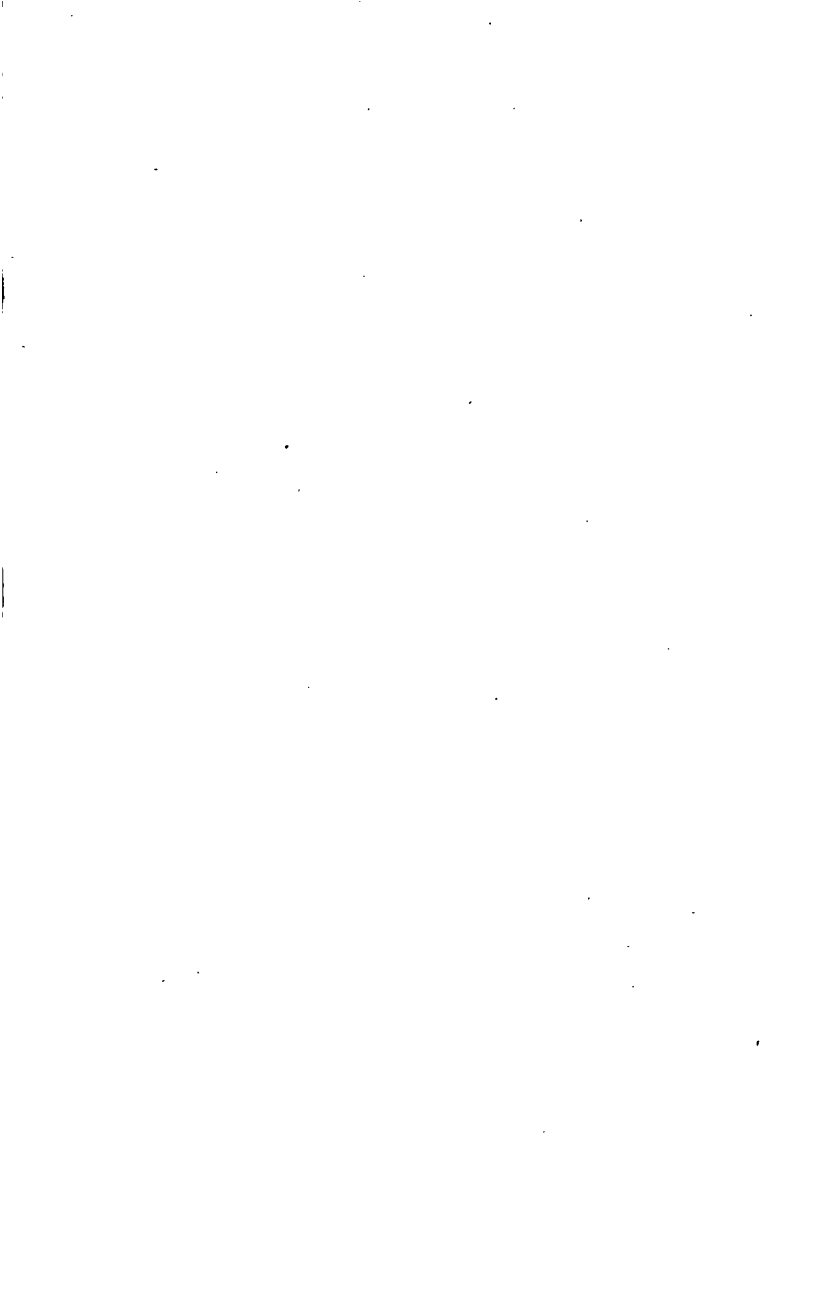
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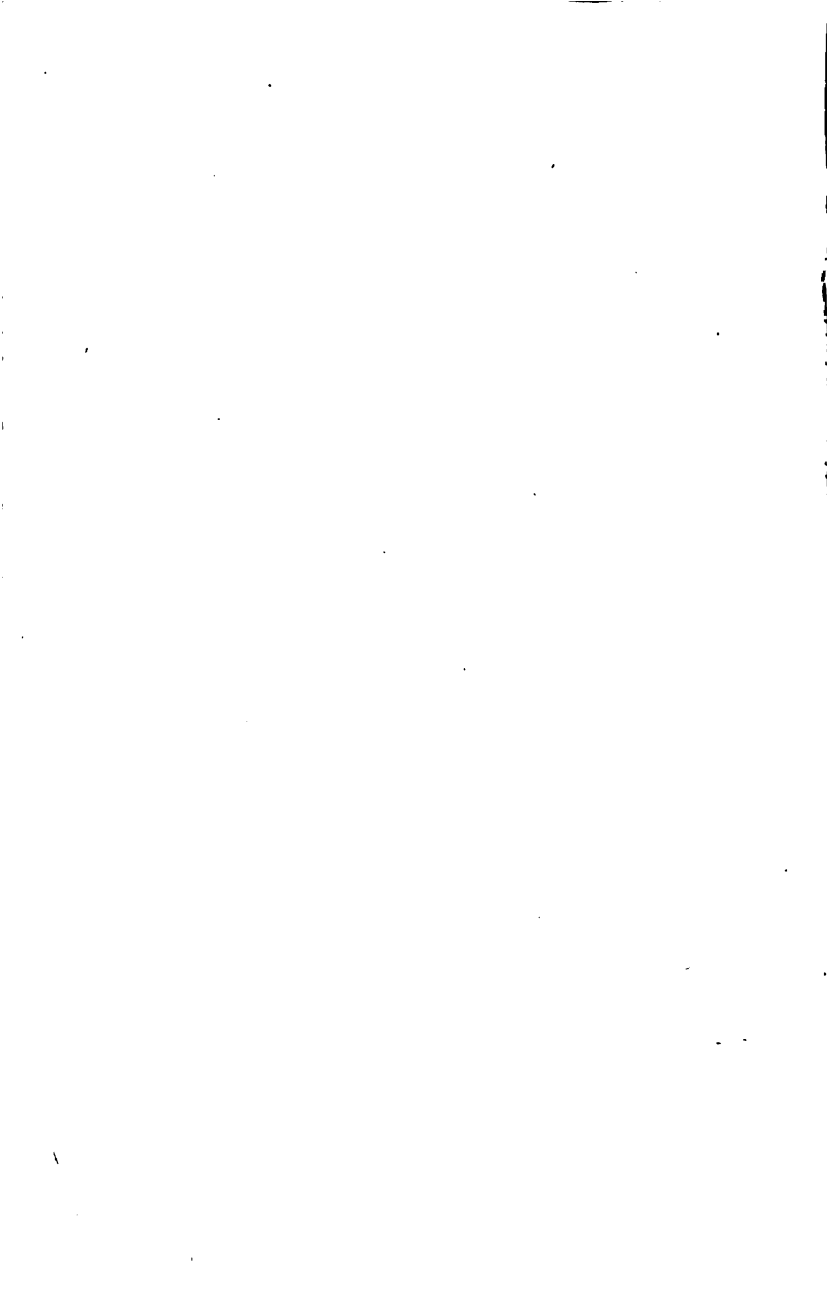
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